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ABSTRACT

The educational and social rationale for granting academic credit for off-campus learning grows out of the notion that educational systems now have the capability to change from selective to adaptive systems. If this change is to occur in ways to permit access, not just in terms of admission but in terms of credentials, then concomitant changes in institutional practices must take place. The granting of academic credit for learning acquired off-campus is viewed by some as a socially just method to bestow credentials earned regardless of source and is a logical extension of the access goal. The focus of this paper is the granting of credit for prior off-campus learning, a form of credit awarded for experiential learning that is in contrast to such sponsored programs as cooperative learning and field experience. Several procedures are in use to grant credit for prior off-campus learning. A traditional method to grant credit for off-campus learning is an examination for college-level credit. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is the best known method. Academic credit is also being granted for off-campus learning from life and work experience. Special degree programs, such as the external degree, make great use of the various forms of academic credit for off-campus learning. The emphasis of this report is on learner-centered methods of evaluation that permit institutions to become responsive to the growing market of new students who seek credentials from higher education institutions. (Author/PG)

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Academic Credit for Prior Off-Campus Learning

David A. Trivett

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Foreword

The award of credit for prior off-campus learning has greatly increased in recent years. Institutions of higher education have come to realize that ways must be found to assess what knowledge students bring to campus and how it can be translated into academic credit equivalents. The most difficult problem is how prior learning outside the classroom setting can be measured and related to that learning taking place within the classroom. There are those who argue that the classroom experience cannot be duplicated by merely taking a test. But there are others who argue that learning experience gained outside the classroom far exceeds the classroom experience and can only be measured in part by test taking. This paper examines the issues and looks at programs that provide ways to assess this prior learning. The author, David A. Trivett, is a research associate on the staff of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education.

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Overview

The educational and social rationale for granting academic credit for off-campus learning grows out of the notion that educational systems now have the capability to change from selective to adaptive systems. If this change is to occur in ways to permit access, not just in terms of admission but in terms of credentials, then concomitant changes in institutional practices must take place. The granting of academic credit for learning acquired off-campus is viewed by some as a socially just method to bestow credentials earned regardless of source and is a logical extension of the access goal.

The focus of this paper is the granting of credit for prior off-campus learning, a form of credit awarded for experiential learning that is in contrast to such sponsored programs as cooperative learning and field experience. As a form of nontraditional education, it is not clear to what extent academic credit is being granted for out-of-classroom learning on a national scale. However, awareness and pursuit of the adult market may be accelerating its application.

The traditional emphasis on credit for time of exposure in the classroom poses a dilemma for programs not based on regular attendance; in other words, three credits for three hours per week for one semester as opposed to simply passing a test, with no course work and no time requirement. Recent research endeavors and publications identify the numerous problems and issues pertaining to academic credit for off-campus and prior learning. Recommendations include ways to approach the problem on campuses where a program of academic credit for off-campus learning is being considered.

Three major procedures are in use to grant credit for prior off-campus learning. A well-known and traditional method to grant credit for off-campus learning is an examination for college-level credit. As with other methods, the educational rationale is that credit should be granted for knowledge learned, regardless of source or method. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is the best known method. A person is examined for general or specific knowledge in relation to a college course or program of study. If the person performs satisfactorily on the examination, the examiner recommends an appropriate amount of college credit. Innumerable issues accompany the use of CLEP by colleges and universities, with most reflecting the difficulty in securing acceptance of examination results in lieu of a

college course or program. Nevertheless, many successful examples of the use of CLEP are documented. A recent development is the availability of the CLEP examination through public libraries. Other college-level examinations used for credit include the American College Testing Service (ACT) and the Regents College Proficiency test.

For many years, the *Guide*, a publication of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experience, has evaluated noncollegiate educational programs in the military services and suggested academic credit equivalence. The work of CASE now is superseded by the Office of Educational Credit, which will issue new, annually updated *Guides*. In addition, credit recommendations will be made for courses in other non-collegiate organizations. A prototype guide has already been developed by the University of the State of New York that recommends credit for courses offered by major corporations and other organizations. For military service personnel, translation of service experience to academic credit has long been facilitated by the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI), which has been replaced by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). The Continuing Education Unit (CEU) recognizes learning in noncollegiate organizations but is not used to grant academic credit for off-campus learning.

Academic credit also is being granted for off-campus learning from life and work experience. The Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning Program (CAEL) and its organizational arms dominate current efforts to bring order into the practice of granting credit for learning from experience. Experiential learning occurs in a manner almost opposite to that of classroom learning. This difference is at the root of the many problems encountered by colleges and universities that attempt to assess experiential learning for credit. CAEL publications provide an introduction to the practices and issues. Assessment of life and work experience for credit is being successfully used by several institutions.

Special degree programs, such as the external degree, make great use of the various forms of academic credit for off-campus learning. One successful example is the New York Regents External Degree, where some program graduates have earned all their academic credit from off-campus learning. Other special degree programs for adults and community members make similar use of academic credit for off-campus learning.

The methods discussed here of awarding credit for prior off-campus learning will be described in detail in the chapters to follow.

The emphasis is on learner-centered methods of evaluation that permit institutions to become responsive to the growing market of new students who seek credentials from higher education institutions.

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The Educational and Social Rationale for Crediting Prior Off-Campus Learning

For years a major concern in the educational community has been the problem of allowing for individual differences and the need for the individualization of instruction. In this respect educational systems tend to operate in either the selective or the adaptive mode. The *selective* mode is characterized by "minimal variation in the conditions under which individuals are expected to learn" (Glaser 1972, p. 5). Within this selective mode only a narrow range of instructional options are available and only a limited number of paths to success are open. Particular abilities are required of the student for him to succeed. These traditionally have been abilities to manipulate numbers and words. The measurement of these abilities is affirmed by success within the educational system and elsewhere. By selecting individuals with similar abilities the educational system holds to a minimum the responses it must make to individual variation.

On the other hand, the *adaptive* mode assumes that educational environments can provide a range and variety of instructional methods and paths to success. Methods of learning are adapted to and matched with what each individual student brings to the system. Success within the adaptive mode is represented by the student's ability to continue learning and to move toward the attainment of his own goals (p. 6). The student's set of aptitudes, interests, background, and talents comprise the basis for the selection of learning paths provided by the educational system. Glaser believes that education and psychology have moved to positions whereby the adaptation of educational environments to individual differences is more likely. However, major questions remain to be answered. How can the pattern of an individual's interests and abilities be matched to a method and content of instruction? How can the educational environment adjust to the talents, strengths, and weaknesses of the individual while taking into account the social and personal goals of education? How can the unprepared individual meet the demands of the available methods of instruction (p. 8)?

Although much of Glaser's discussion explores the need to identify new aptitudes, styles, and learning approaches to permit the systematic individualization of instruction, he does raise two concerns about possible limitations to the progress toward individualization.

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First, he argues that progress will not occur unless research is accompanied by "the design and development of operating educational institutions" (p. 11). Second, he questions whether the nature of our present society can support the notion of an adaptive educational environment, since high value is placed on the products of the traditional, selective educational system (p. 12).

Within the world of higher education, new programs like the Regents External Degree and the Syracuse Regional Learning Service as well as heightened interest in the assessment and credentialing of learning obtained outside the traditional system reflect institutional attempts to reify a theoretical interest in individualized education. The assets and rhetoric associated with these new programs may also represent a social willingness to examine more adaptive modes in higher education.

Consider, for example, certain of the conditions described as locksteps and barriers to educational freedom by Bailey and Macy (1974) in their proposal for a Regional Learning Service. They regard existing academic credentials (preliminary to graduate and professional work) as arbitrarily limited to the high school diploma, associate degree, and baccalaureate degree. A "truly free" educational system would recognize a variety of credentials, yet the present system does not even necessarily recognize the mastery of basic skills.

In many instances there is no way to interrelate the many certificates, licenses, diplomas, and degrees that are granted. Meanwhile, within the educational system itself, there is a "lockstep" of points, units, and credit hours that has meant that diplomas and degrees signify time served rather than knowledge acquired. Competencies acquired from one level or from one type of institution may not be recognized at another level or by a different type of institution. Also, many individuals have been prevented from acquiring credentials because time or distance make it impossible for them to resume their education where they began it (pp. 16-20).

The Regional Learning Service is designed to eliminate these barriers and locksteps by acting as a "broker" between potential learners and the formal or informal educational resources of central New York State. By providing counseling, information, and contact persons, in addition to offering competent assessment of a client's educational development, the Service will make it easier for students to acquire learning of their choice (pp. v-vi; i). In this instance, an institution has been established to encourage educational systems to become more adaptive.

Another organization that has been instrumental in bringing forward ideas that support adaptive educational systems is the Commission on Non-Traditional Study. Their definition of the "attitude" of nontraditional study clearly demonstrates this:

> This attitude puts the student first and the institution second, concentrates more on the former's need than the latter's convenience, encourages diversity of individual opportunity rather than uniform prescription and deemphasizes time, space, and even course requirements in favor of competence and, where applicable, performance. It has concern for the learner of any age and circumstance for the degree aspirant as well as the person who finds sufficient reward in enriching life through constant, periodic or occasional study (Commission on Non-Traditional Study 1973, p. xv).

Several recommendations of the Commission fuse the attitude of nontraditional study to practices that would make educational systems more "adaptive" in Glaser's sense. In some cases the granting of credit for off-campus learning is promoted as a consequence of that fusion. Yet unless access to education is encouraged, philosophic acceptance of adaptive systems will not be fruitful. For this reason, "New agencies must be created to make possible easy access to information and develop better ways to disseminate it, to perform guidance and counseling services, and to be assessors and repositories of credit for student achievement" (p. xv). For education to be available to all who would benefit from it, it must be provided through an abundant variety of nontraditional modes (p. 7).

In the Commission's vision, competence, performance, and adaptability are more important products of education to be measured than are the "number of courses taken, credit hours earned, and information assimilated" (pp. 28-29). The Commission rejects the notion that the faculty or the administration knows what's good for the student and states that the acceptance by each student of responsibility for his own education should be the major objective of education in the future (p. 38).

Although the "formal" or traditional educational system is still generally perceived as a ladder that begins in nursery school and ends in graduate school, this idea is neither appropriate nor in accord with the facts. The Commission urges the acceptance of lifelong learning, whereby there is less pressure to prepare the person for life at the beginning and more possibility of continuing, recurrent, and specially tailored education as that life progresses (p. 48). Consistent with this view is the observation that the "alternate systems"—educational enterprises offered by labor unions, industry, the military, government, and proprietary schools—have a contribution to make

to the continuous education of people, one that can be recognized and used within traditional education rather than ignored (p. 43). The Commission also recommends that new techniques and devices be developed to measure and assess the knowledge gained by students in all forms of nontraditional study as well as from work experience and community service (p. 125).

The Commission acknowledges that nontraditional techniques do not exist in a world of their own. They must be subject to evaluation and related to the larger world of traditional education. "New evaluative tools must be developed to match the nontraditional arrangements now evolving, so that accreditation and credentialing will have appropriate measures of quality" (p. xviii). Also, "cooperation and collaboration must be encouraged among collegiate, community, and alternate educational entities so that diverse educational programs and structures may come into being" (p. xix).

The recommendations of the Commission have been influential in maintaining the atmosphere for more "adaptive" educational systems and in stimulating the development of organizations that have promoted the awarding of academic credit for off-campus learning.

An important factor in the rationale for the recognition of credit for knowledge learned regardless of source is that since World War II the first and foremost concern of goal statements for American higher education has been the extension of access and the call for equality of opportunity to higher education. Although changes have occurred in the meaning of those phrases throughout the years, the variations have explored different ways to extend access. For example, when new institutions were needed to extend access into the local community, community colleges became the prime force in the attempt to diffuse educational opportunity (Trivett 1973, p. 54). The most recent goal statements stress the need to make available diverse institutions that students might move among freely. They also emphasize the desirability and necessity of providing recurrent, lifelong education. Finally, recent statements of goals have generally proposed that institutions of postsecondary education provide different technological and media paths for students to follow while learning and a range of starting places responding to individual competencies (p. 55).

In summary, educational and psychological progress make it possible for educational environments to be less selective and more adaptive to individual differences. Programs such as the Regents External Degree have been established to match individual and edu-

cational opportunity, stressing the value of what is known over how, where, and when it was learned. Recommendations of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study have stressed the need for lifelong education and the valuing of education from all sources if true educational opportunity is to be provided. While goal statements for American higher education over the past 30 years have spoken of the need for gradual extension of access, recent varieties have stressed the individualization of access as well as the recognition of the diversity of learning modes. The ideal—that educational systems should be adaptive and individualized, so that learning regardless of source can be acknowledged, thereby extending access to higher education and its social benefits—forms the background for a discussion of practices whereby academic credit is granted for learning off-campus. The words of Roger Heyns capture this social spirit: "So long as economic, professional, and social rewards are in large measure based on credentials, social justice requires that, whenever possible and sensible, all learning be examined for its possible incorporation into the conventional system of credentialing" (American Council on Education 1975, p. vii).

Definitions, Use, Developments and Issues in Academic Credit for Off-Campus Learning

This discussion focuses on granting academic credit for off-campus learning, especially for *prior off-campus learning*, and includes some types of learning usually referred to as *experiential*. The granting of this type of credit frequently occurs as part of a nontraditional educational program. Terms such as experiential learning, nontraditional programs, and prior off-campus learning (as contrasted to sponsored learning programs) need closer definition.

Defined broadly, "experiential learning is the knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and skills one acquires in a given experience, a cluster of related experiences, or in the totality of one's experience" (*Final Report* [1974], p. 2A). Since that would include learning from traditional classrooms, an excluding clause is usually appended that eliminates typical classroom learning for purposes of discussion. If a program exists to grant credit for experiential learning through a college or university, the program may be designed to grant credit either for *prior learning* or for *sponsored learning*. Sponsored programs, such as internships, community aid programs, and cross-cultural learning experiences, are established by colleges and universities specifically to provide a learning experience for a student as part of a program. Value of the program in terms of credit is assumed beforehand. These programs, frequently referred to as field experience programs, have existed for many years and have their own literature. For this reason they are not discussed in this paper. In contrast, a program of credit for prior learning attempts "to recognize learning that has resulted through experience before the student sought to enroll for college programs or which occurred when he or she was enrolled though not under the supervision and auspices of the institution. . . . It includes all types of out-of-classroom experiences that result in learning judged to be of college level . . ." (*Current Practices . . .* 1974, p. 18).

The granting of academic credit for off-campus learning is frequently conceived as part of a nontraditional system for delivery of instructional services. According to the Connecticut Commission for Higher Education,

> In the traditional mode of delivery, teachers give 'courses of instruction' to groups of students according to an established syllabus and within an

> established frame of time and place. The result is 'learning,' which is 'evaluated' by quizzes and examinations. Various exercises are also required, such as working problems and writing essays, and these too are evaluated as evidence that learning has occurred. Failure to attend classes is often penalized by arbitrary reduction of the grade after evaluation is completed. 'Validation' of the learning traditionally takes place prior to the offering of the course. This is accomplished through a process of formal institutional approval (*Improvement of Opportunity* . . . 1973, p. 13).

On the basis of the instructor's recommendation, course credits are given that lead to degrees and result in recognition of learning. In contrast, the nontraditional mode emphasizes evidence that learning has taken place, regardless of time, place, content, or duration of instruction. Validation is not automatic. It takes place after the fact and rests on the decision of validators that the learning is equivalent to academic classroom learning. Evaluation following validation is also given greater importance because it rests on demonstrated competence or achievement without reference to what happens in a classroom. "No points are given for good attendance. No points are subtracted for late assignments" (p. 15). Only "recognition" is the same as in the traditional mode.

In their attempt to construct a framework for recognition of various types of nontraditional education, the American Council on Education has split nontraditional learning into three categories. One includes those nonformal learning experiences that result in the accumulation of knowledge or competencies without supervision or sponsorship. Such knowledge might be evaluated through use of a standardized examination or other means. The second category includes formal learning experiences that occur in agencies not primarily designed to be educational institutions, for example, the military service, business, and industry. The third category is sponsored learning experiences that are nontraditional primarily because the instructional method is unique. Examples include work done under learning contracts, field experience education, and study with a mentor (Miller 1974a, p. 190).

Extent to Which Academic Credit Is Granted

It would be helpful to know the extent to which academic credit is granted by American colleges and universities for off-campus prior learning. Unfortunately, truly current or specific survey results are not known to the author. Ruyle and Geiselman (1974) report the results of a 1972 survey of the entire population of American colleges and universities listed in the *Education Directory*. The survey results

were based upon 1,185 institutions that were contacted either through the initial questionnaire or by follow-up. In their judgment the response was generally representative of American higher education with the exception that 2-year institutions were underrepresented. The newer nontraditional institutions were not queried because they were not in the *Directory*. Even so, the 1,185 respondents may be overrepresentative of institutions with nontraditional programs. They found that colleges and universities are offering more programs off campus and through new media and are creating programs for adults beyond the traditional college age. Also they "are increasingly awarding academic credit for knowledge and experience formerly unaccreditable" (p. 53). Although the use of standardized exams has become commonplace in higher education, use of their results for granting credit has not become customary. They found that two-thirds of the institutions surveyed will grant some credit or reduce the length of a program on the basis of an acceptable student score on some examination. Only 20 percent of the responding institutions refuse to grant any credit for examination (p. 62). Although it is possible at two out of ten institutions surveyed for students to earn more than one year's credit by examination (p. 92), many institutions do not publicize policies and administrative or academic procedures are used to discourage the taking of exams for academic credit (p. 63). Of the standardized examinations for college level subject matter, the Advanced Placement (A.P.) and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams are most widely accepted. Thirty-five percent of the institutions surveyed report that they give credit for military training courses on the basis of the Commission for the Accreditation of Service Experience (CASE) recommendations (now Office on Educational Credit, American Council on Education) (p. 61). Least likely to be recognized for academic credit is work experience, unless the experience can be verified by examination. No more than 8 percent of the responding institutions granted credit for work experience, such as the Peace Corps, Vista, or community volunteer work (pp. 60-61).

Some additional perspective can be gained from a survey reported by Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL) (*Current Practices . . .* 1974, p. 4, Appendix). CAEL sent out 3,000 questionnaires and received 400 replies, with 350 pertinent programs described. The final number of questionnaires coded was 266; therefore, the results are not regarded as normative for higher education. Of the responding institutions, 40 percent grant credit for one or more types of prior learning and 31 percent grant credit for work experience in busi-

ness. Meyer (1974b, p. 2) estimates that in 1963, when he began working with a program, fewer than 10 institutions were involved in granting credit for noncollege learning. He estimates that close to 200 institutions were involved in the process in 1974. As a consequence of his inquiry, Meyer (1974c) was astonished at the number of programs that have begun to grant credit for life or work experience without thinking through the issues (p. 7). He found credit being granted at four levels: directly for the life or work experience itself; for knowledge, competency, or skill gained from experience; for analysis of the learning gained from experience; and for analysis and synthesis of discrete bodies of knowledge gained from the same or different experiences (p. 8).

Ganzemiller mailed a three-page questionnaire to 365 colleges and universities offering at least the B.A. at primarily mid-Western locations with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000. With a response rate of 63 percent, reflecting generally the population surveyed, he found great variation in credit policy regarding traditional courses. One hundred seventy to one hundred eighty schools responded to questions on policies and credit for nontraditional learning. Of these, close to half had a policy on credit for learning that took place before enrollment. Sixty-six percent actually gave credit for learning before enrollment (Ganzemiller 1973, pp. 3-10).

In September of 1972, a survey was conducted for the Connecticut Commission for Higher Education. All forty-three accredited institutions of higher education in the state were surveyed and all replied. In 1971-72 approximately 700 students earned credit by examination in Connecticut, resulting in a total of 4,200 hours of credit. Other practices regarding academic credit for off-campus learning or experience were reported as follows: 29 of 43 institutions grant credit by examination in lieu of course enrollment; 27 accept transfer credit based on examination alone; 13 grant credit for learning in proprietary schools; 16 for industrial or in-service training; 10 for study in community cultural organizations; 14 for employment experience; 22 for learning achievement in the armed services; and 24 out of 43 have a procedure to validate nontraditional learning (*Improvement of Opportunity* . . . 1973, pp. 43-45).

Obviously, until survey results are available from which useful generalizations can be made, any attempts to describe the extent of practice in granting academic credit for off-campus learning would be hazardous. However, college and university interest is increasing and it does seem safe to conclude that the granting of credit for academic

learning as measured by examination is far more common than is the granting of credit for learning away from the campus or for unsupervised experiences.

The Adult Market

One reason for interest in academic credit for off-campus learning by colleges and universities is the relationship between such programs and the potential "adult" market for higher education. In many cases, this viewpoint may be supported by references to findings for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study that a large number of adult Americans (77 percent) are interested in learning more about a subject or a skill (Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs 1974, pp. 15-17). Their survey data reveal that adults with some postsecondary education are likely to be interested in more of this type of education and that the majority of adults may seek learning opportunities that will lead to formal recognition, even though many will participate in noncredit courses (pp. 40-41).

The regional study of Bailey and Macy (1974) also found that in central New York State, 85 percent of adults over 25 have 3 years or less of college, and 43 percent left school without a diploma (p. 2). If only 10 percent of the potential clientele for their learning services appeared, there would be 40,000 candidates for diplomas and degrees (p. 3).

Much of the interest in granting credit to adults for learning from life and work is a recognition of what adults bring to the college besides seriousness of purpose, such as prior experience and prior knowledge. Meyer asserts that "the adults, with a variety of learning experiences already behind them, have the right to have that learning assessed and evaluated for academic credit. To do less would be to perpetuate a system of social injustice" (Meyer 1974b, p. 6). The adults are usually regarded as a portion of the "new market" for higher education (minority group persons, housewives, veterans, blue-collar workers, elderly and retired persons, and college and high school dropouts), and figures are produced to show that if only fractions of this market can be reached, a large number of new students can be served by postsecondary education.

The desire of these new students for programs where credit is granted for life experience is also attested to (*Report from the Presidential Committee . . .* 1973, pp. 3-6, 12; see also Ricklefs 1974, p. 25). For example, at the College of New Rochelle, the New Resources Program, designed in 1972, seeks to attract adult students by a cur-

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riculum based on the idea that adults have already learned much, and credits are given for educationally valid life experiences ("A Second Chance for Adults" 1973, p. 15).

Academic Credit

In a general discussion of the credit system, Warren (1974) observes that the use of "credit" to signify the successful completion of a college course is a firmly entrenched but recent phenomena, having blossomed after the arrival of the elective system in American colleges. Prior to the elective system, students received degrees for completing a 4-year curriculum and there was little variety in its essential parts. With the elective system, the need arose for a method of equating the units that led to the degree. "The accounting procedure most commonly adopted was to divide the typical four-year program into units small enough to represent individual courses, assign several units to each course according to the amount of time it required, and aggregate these units or 'credits' into a full college program" (p. 118). Thus, the meaning of a credit is derived from a degree and the ultimate comparability rests on what a degree means. (See Heffernan (1973) for the origin, meaning, and application of the credit system.) According to Warren, use of the degree-credit approach continues because of public confidence in it; yet it is really an archaic system, based on what a student is presumed to learn in a 4-year period. Actually this is variable and inadequately defined, and weaknesses and flaws can be seen in conventional use. For example, at the completion of a course a student receives a fixed number of credits regardless of his level of performance. Credit for a course is based on tests and projects, the assumption being that participation in course experiences will result in learning. Furthermore, classroom tests tend to indicate relative level of accomplishment rather than actual student accomplishment.

Warren relates difficulties encountered in assigning credit for nontraditional study to problems with the credit system. He argues, "In principle, the measurement of learning is unaffected by the process through which the learning is acquired. Thus the measurement of non-classroom learning ought to be no more difficult than the measurement of classroom learning" (p. 128). He attributes the slowness in crediting nontraditional study to the feeling of unfamiliarity with out-of-class learning, difficulty in validation, and the possibility of error and fraud in claims of competence. He suggests that if less emphasis were placed on the degree system (and subsidiary credit systems) and more emphasis on specific credentials for limited purposes, there

would be less likelihood of fraud. Warren notes that credit for work experience after a student is enrolled is a widely accepted practice, yet far fewer institutions give credit for work and life experience gained prior to enrollment.

That situation is changing. Recognizing the difference between classroom and work, colleges are granting credit for experience without attempting to relate this experience specifically to courses (p. 124). Since all credit rests in some manner on a subjective judgment of accomplishment, the major difficulty associated with granting academic credit for prior nonacademic experiences arises from the original use of credit to signify exposure to a quantity of instruction. Noting that it is now possible to gain college credit for any form of off-campus learning that can be validated through a standardized examination, Warren predicts that college degrees granted by examination or based on the evaluation of competence will be commonplace by the end of the century.

Warren observes that standardized tests themselves have inherent problems. Any score is arbitrary, even if it is based on local norms. Although courses vary widely, some critics argue that no test can be the equivalent of a course. Since nontraditional study is itself varied and individualized, the idea of "normed" examinations for some knowledge is not feasible.

A possible solution to these problems is the use of criterion-referenced measurement for nontraditional study. However, Warren argues that a better solution would be to graft more general information regarding the educational accomplishments of students to the credit system. Certificates or degrees would be based on the accomplishment of specified requirements in the area of content, type of activity, and performance level. The time required for learning would be of no consequence (p. 141). The broader crediting system would work for traditional and nontraditional study and facilitate the interchange of credits of all types.

In spite of weaknesses, shortcomings, and criticisms of the credit system, the prospect of its use to legitimize nontraditional study through granting academic credit for noncollege learning remains strong. Credits and degrees are media of exchange that need to be protected (Bailey and Macy 1974, p. 120). Miller argues that if nontraditional learning is to grow, formal mechanisms must be provided for validating it. Most students are motivated to learn by more tangible rewards than learning itself, in that they seek credentials. Credentials are granted by institutions recognized by society for

that purpose. The traditional method of recognition is accomplished through third-party validation of institutions and programs, a process designed to maintain and assess the integrity of educational sponsors (Miller 1974a, p. 189). At the present time, mechanisms underway to validate nontraditional learning are based on these assumptions:

> 1. The values, standards, policies, practices, products, and reward system of traditional education will be the touchstone for nontraditional education. . . .
> 2. Nontraditional education will flourish and be socially useful if it is provided an adequate interface with traditional education. The most efficacious interface is a system which equitably recognizes all learning, regardless of where and how it takes place.
> 3. The credit hour will remain the most widely used unit of education currency in the foreseeable future. . . . Nontraditional educational experience that can be measured by credit hours will facilitate the flow of credit among various educational programs and institutions.
> 4. The bulk of degrees and other educational credentials will continue to be awarded mainly by traditional institutions. . . .
> 5. Elemental fairness dictates that the educational community not require higher standards or more stringent validation procedures for nontraditional learning than it does for traditional education (Miller 1974a, p. 189).

Because of the value of academic credit, its use to recognize learning other than traditionally academic has drawn calls for caution also. Nelson (1974), discussing the growth of external degree programs, suggests that they have been boosted by a lack of distinction between academic competencies and educational experiences, where academic competencies are a narrow subset of the educational experiences. Educational experiences admittedly may be more important and relevant to students, but it has become obnoxious to draw distinctions otherwise.

In a similar vein, Bowen notes that there is a "growing disposition to accept for credit learning from all sources, and not to confine the granting of credit to that learning achieved under the auspices or guidance of a college or university" (Bowen 1973, p. 276). The questions this practice raises for Bowen include how this learning should be evaluated, whether learning from outside is really as good as learning within colleges and universities, and how one decides what in life experience merits credit toward a degree (p. 276). He argues that the university should stick to academic learning "which consists in part of the mastery of systematic and organized bodies of important information, principles, and ideas in the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, arts, languages, mathematics, philosophy and history" (p. 277). Other learning, such as that associated with the professions, is accepted by Bowen, but he distinguishes this from learning gained

from life experience, and suggests that colleges and universities "accredit only that learning acquired outside the campus that corresponds to courses or requirements included in the resident curriculum" (p. 278).

Work in Progress

At least one major work is underway concerned with academic credit for off-campus experience. Peter Meyer (1974c) has been conducting a study, supported by a Ford Foundation grant, of the practice of awarding academic credit for noncollege learning. The major purposes of his study, to be described in a forthcoming book (*Awarding College Credit for Non-College Learning*, forthcoming) are: "(1) to demonstrate the need for establishing faculty-based models for granting academic credit for learning achieved through nonacademic life/work experiences; (2) to offer a rationale for the academic merit of the process; (3) to examine the process as it exists in a variety of institutions; (4) to identify some of the major problems of the process and offer suggested solutions to these problems; (5) to offer specific guidelines for implementing new programs; and (6) to offer some recommendations for further study" (Meyer 1974c, p. 2). Meyer is concerned exclusively with prior learning at the undergraduate level and he makes no attempt to offer a national survey of practice (p. 3). He found poor communication among the existing programs and a dearth of literature, training materials, and training techniques (p. 4). Because of this situation, he recommends a national center for the assessment of prior learning that would function as a clearinghouse, offering training to faculty, developing training materials, analyzing costs, and actively engaging in research (p. 5). Meyer suggests that this clearinghouse might grow from the American Council on Education's Office of Educational Credit. He also recommends that accrediting agencies take an active, guiding role in finding ways of accrediting prior learning (p. 6).

Issues and Problems

Although academic recognition of off-campus experience and learning is not that alien to the history of higher education, strongly felt objections to the practice exist along with simple caution. Meyer (1974c) has identified four "resistances" that are characteristic among faculty members:

1. "If you have not learned it from me in my classroom, you have not learned it." The "it" usually refers to a set of values. Meyer suggests that the faculty must be willing to admit that their curriculum

is value-laden. They should also be able to admit that students can demonstrate acceptable competencies while reflecting different values (p. 10).

2. ". . . the process is too subjective." This resistance fades when the process is seen to be like other examining processes and when the overall issue of subjective standards on campus is brought up. The real problem is that many faculty insist upon using more stringent standards for off-campus or experiential education than they would apply on campus, and employ even more stringent standards for prior learning (p. 11).

3. "Faculty do not like to view themselves as credentialers or certifiers." Faculty regard themselves as either teachers or credentialers. In reality, their ordinary work requires them to be both (p. 11).

4. Faculty tend to assert that "the accrediting association will not allow them to grant credit for prior learning" (p. 12). To Meyer, this is another good reason for the accrediting associations to clarify their interest in accrediting programs for noncollege learning.

Another issue on the horizon is how colleges concerned with associate or baccalaureate education would react to the granting of credit by high schools for off-campus learning. Furthermore, will the same learning then be subject to crediting at the college level? Valley suggests the possibility of several "swirling pools" of crediting for experiential learning occurring at three levels (secondary, collegiate, and graduate), with problems developing when it becomes necessary to relate credit granted for off-campus learning at one level to requirements and activities at another level. This implies that the transcripts of credit for off-campus learning will also become more of a problem (Valley 1974). As in child-rearing, a theoretical ideal—in this case, credit for learning, regardless of source—can become problematic when carried to an extreme. What if a person were to earn a high school diploma, college degree, and graduate degree exclusively on the basis of examinations for credit, credit for life and work experience, and field experience?

Another problem is suggested more by historical generalization than by fact. At the present time, programs to grant credit for off-campus learning and experience are growing. Many program administrators exhibit fastidious concern for procedure, testing, and validation. Many of the programs go to great lengths to "touch base" with legitimate authority as well as with hidden power bases on campus. Indeed, these practices are recommended for success. However, it seems possible that the search for legitimacy and regularity will lead these programs away from their intended clientele

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and mission, particularly in those cases where the intention is to credit the learning and experience of unusual people such as successful adults returning to college, minority persons who have risen to leadership roles, or young students who have explored subjects in depth on their own.

Another issue ties credit for off-campus learning to the Pandora's box of general education, distribution requirements, and electives. Most of the program descriptions read by the author stated that credit for off-campus learning must be related to the objectives and goals of the student's degree program. Why must credit for off-campus learning be tied to a degree objective? How do institutions react when students who have received credit under one degree program want to transfer to another degree program? It appears paradoxical to insist on a "coherent" program of study while granting the value individual experience has for learning. On the other hand, it limits the application of the rationale "credit for learning regardless of source" to "credit for learning regardless of source as long as it fits into a degree plan." One solution appears to be to insist that credit for off-campus learning be granted only in relation to a specific course. However, many programs do grant block credit for *x* number of years of experience of a given type, suggesting that the experience of work contributes generally to the preparation of a student (as is assumed to be the case with field experience programs).

One other issue is raised when one considers the need for fairness in programs to credit off-campus learning: how to be fair and consistent in granting equal credit to students for equal learning. If time of exposure is no longer the basis for credit, what can be used so that one student gets the same amount of credit for learning something as another student? A related issue is how to overcome the tendency to be more stringent in assessing off-campus learning than in assessing on-campus, traditional learning.

An even more important prospective issue of fairness is: how fair is it to the student to grant credit for his learning and thereby deprive him of the necessity of "going to college" which may have value in itself? Most proponents of academic credit for off-campus learning argue that the credential is the thing, that the equity of credit for learning is a more important value than the alleged value of enduring a process. Needless to say, this is an argument without a clear answer, but one that may become important as the student-consumer movement flourishes.

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Guidelines

The institution that is considering granting academic credit for the off-campus experience or learning of its students faces many decisions and questions. Contrary to the situation a few years ago, the institution is no longer alone. Many organizations are moving into the field to lend credence and organization. Certainly the work of CAEL is an example. In addition, Meyer (1974) suggests several guidelines designed to help institutions put together a program without succumbing to the notion that there is one ideal model that must be followed. Meyer's guidelines stress openness, reality, and legitimacy. The institution's ordinary committees should propose and weigh the decision to begin a program of credit for prior learning. Deliberations and decisions regarding what will be credited, when, and how the learning credited will be related to degree programs should follow the normal course. Inumerable details must be considered, such as how faculty are to be paid, what forms are to be used, how records will be maintained and students' portfolios analyzed (if they are used), and how students can appeal decisions. Stressing the legitimacy that comes from group decisions about quality and methodology, Meyer urges those who desire to begin programs to reject the inclination to work sub rosa, recognizing that long-term acceptance and legitimacy are more desirable objectives than immediate implementation (Meyer 1975, in press).

College Level Examination Programs

One method for evaluating off-campus learning and granting credit for it is to give a student an examination. The examination may attempt to measure the extent to which a student's knowledge resembles the knowledge acquired by a typical student at the end of a course, or it may probe the extent to which his general knowledge corresponds to the general knowledge of students who have proceeded to some level on their way through an educational program. Both strategies are employed in national college level examination programs currently in use.

Typically, the examination programs rest on the belief that knowledge learned at the college level should count for college credit, regardless of how it is learned. Under some official aegis, a group of scholars stipulate the content and level of knowledge appropriate to a college course, such as "Introductory Calculus." They frame trial questions to sample the level and extent of knowledge. Next, the questions and format are reviewed by technical specialists. Then, the examination is given to two groups of students: (1) those who have taken a course such as the one for which the exam is constructed, and (2) students who believe their knowledge is equivalent to that obtained from the course. The examination results are compared in a normal process so that a given score result approximates the level of knowledge obtained by successful completers of the course itself. When the exam is made available nationally or regionally, candidates may take the examination, seeking college credit for their knowledge. The credit comes from either the examining agency or, more typically, from a college or university that accepts in some measure the recommendation of the examining agency and grants credit. Institutions may insist that the candidate reach levels attained by their own students on the examination before credit will be granted.

Credit by examination is one method by which institutions can be more responsive and adaptive to the actual learning obtained by an individual. Ideally, for example, "The College-Level Examination Program enables both traditional and nontraditional students to earn college-credit by examination. Anyone may take CLEP tests to demonstrate his or her college-level competency no matter when, where, or how this knowledge has been acquired" (*CLEP General . . .* 1974, p. 2). Undoubtedly the acceptance by colleges and universities

of the principle that students should receive credit for college-level learning acquired in nontraditional ways has permitted some students of all ages to reduce their time and money investment through the use of CLEP (p. 2). Furthermore, Houle regards the development of college-level achievement testing as "the most significant factor" in the groundwork for external degree programs (Houle 1973, p. 76).

The reality of credit-by-examination includes problems, but it is a key structure for granting academic credit for off-campus learning. This chapter will describe the major credit-by-examination program (CLEP) and give examples of its actual use. Several less prominent examination programs are mentioned as well.

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

The most fully developed and widely known college level examination program, one that has been advertised on national television, is the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) sponsored by the College Entrance Examination Board of Princeton, New Jersey. The CLEP program was begun in 1965 and introduced to colleges and universities in 1966.

Based on the historical precedents of the Advanced Placement Examination Program and the Subject Standardized Tests of the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI), the CLEP program strove to jar colleges into awareness of the possibilities of credit by examination while providing a nationwide program of evaluation for "nontraditional college-level education" (*College Credit by Examinaiton . . .* 1970, p. 8). The program was also intended to facilitate transfer for students and help colleges in evaluating the achievement of their own students. The promotion of career mobility was also an objective, since one of the five original goals was "to assist adults who wish to continue their education in order to meet licensing and certification requirements or to qualify for higher positions."

CLEP developers assumed that learning at the college level does occur outside college walls and that this nontraditional learning can be measured and compared with the learning of students who have been in traditional college classrooms. Furthermore, it was assumed that colleges and universities ought to be concerned with what a student knows rather than with his time of exposure to instruction or the number of credits he has acquired (pp. 7-8).

The most recent descriptive brochure for CLEP states that more than 1,500 institutions throughout the U.S. now grant credit on the basis of CLEP scores. A subtle shift in clientele emphasis may be hinted at within the brochure, in that the original conception of

CLEP was to serve the needs of postsecondary students who had acquired their knowledge through nonformal channels. Currently, the program is being used by "growing numbers of college entrants . . . [who are] getting college credit before attending their first class" (*CLEP May Be For You* 1974, p. 3). According to the brochure, a "whole year's worth of credit is common . . . for CLEP examinations taken at the time they enter" (p. 3).

According to Nelson (1974), there has been a definite change in the population of users of CLEP in step with its success. While the original intent was to focus on "new adult clientele," as early as 1969-70 a trend had developed whereby more and more CLEP candidates were under 22. By "this past year" [1973?], at least 40 percent of all CLEP candidates were under 19 year of age (p. 181). The absolute number of adult CLEP candidates has risen, but the relative percentage of adult candidates has fallen. Nevertheless, the overall pitch is directed at both traditional and nontraditional students who seek college credit by examination. The source of the learning may be formal study, private reading, employment experience, noncredit courses, adult classes, military, industrial or business training, advanced high school courses, or radio, television or cassette courses (*CLEP General and Subject Examinations* 1974, p. 2).

Some information is available on how national participants in CLEP view their experience. In spring 1972 a survey was made of participants in CLEP from the previous 4 years (Casserly 1973). Different questionnaires were sent to participants who had requested their scores be sent to colleges and those who had not. Of the 4,000 questionnaires, approximately 40 percent were returned (the response was slightly biased with high scorers). Many participants reported they took CLEP examinations because they wanted college credit after deciding to continue their formal education. The next most often mentioned motivation was personal curiosity. Differences occurred between typical responses of those over 25 and those under. Thus respondents over 25 typically reported job advancement, licensure, and curiosity about personal knowledge more often than the under-25's. Relatively few of the over-25's (21 percent) had taken a formal course in the year prior to taking the CLEP; in fact, 31 percent of the over-25's had not taken a course in 21 or more years. This is true even though the educational levels of the over-25's and the under-25's were roughly the same—high school completion (pp. 3-15). The respondents reported that colleges and universities were more willing to use their CLEP General Examination results for

general credit hours toward degrees than to satisfy specific course requirements (p. 25). Conclusions drawn by Casserly included the need to pressure schools not to use CLEP exams as money-makers (pp. 32-40).

There are actually two basic types of CLEP examination, the General Examinations and the Subject Examination. Both types of examination can be administered at more than 700 test centers and results of the examinations will be kept for 20 years.

Information about CLEP tests for candidates is explicit in explaining that CLEP is an examining agency that recommends the awarding of credit by colleges and universities based on the examination results. The institutions grant the credit. "CLEP candidates should be aware that 'cutting scores' [lowest scores for which credit is granted] and the conditions under which they apply vary from institution to institution" (*CLEP General . . .* 1974, p. 4).

The General Examinations are designed to test materials usually considered in the first two years of college, the "common elements or areas of subject matter." Achievement is measured by a 60-minute multiple-choice test for each of five basic areas in the liberal arts: English Composition, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences and History (*CLEP General . . .* 1974, p. 2).

Examination results for the General Examinations are expressed on a 200-800 scale based on the 1963 norming population of college sophomores. The mean is defined as 500 and the standard deviation as 100. The consequence of the standardized scaled scores is that the score reflects a student's standing in relation to a defined group rather than being an absolute score. "Scores are positions on this scale, not positions in current test-taking groups. This means that a score of 550 on the Humanities examination earned in 1967 has the same meaning as a score of 550 earned in 1973" (*CLEP Scores . . .* p. 5). Small variations from different editions are accommodated.

The norms are based on a representative sample of two- and four-year college sophomores in the U.S. The General Examinations were administered to a sample of 2,582 fulltime students who were completing their sophomore year at 180 colleges in spring 1963 (pp. 10-11). New editions are produced regularly and equated with earlier versions. One completely new General Examination in Mathematics was produced in 1972 because of radical changes in college mathematics (p. 15).

A national study and renorming of the General Examinations is underway currently with the cooperation of the Office of Educa-

tional Credit of the American Council on Education. The hope is that the renorming will increase the acceptance and usefulness of the General Examinations. This project is scheduled for completion in 1976 (Miller 1974b, p. 15).)

Since the adult market has been related to programs granting academic credit for off-campus learning, it should be noted that CLEP General Examination scores for adults apparently measure a growth in knowledge similar to that achieved by sophomore students. Scores in humanities, social sciences and history reflect an accumulation of knowledge over the years and differ sharply from scores in "more formal subjects" (mathematics and natural science) that peak in the traditional college years (*CLEP Scores*, pp. 18-19).

In contrast to the General Examinations, the Subject Examinations are designed to measure achievement equivalent to a specific college course. To obviate the danger of a one-syllabus test, the examinations "stress concepts, principles, relationships, and applications of course material" (*CLEP General . . .* 1974, p. 3). Each subject exam is a 90-minute multiple-choice test that frequently includes a separate 90-minute essay examination. The essays are sent to institutions of the candidate's choice.

The various CLEP Subject Examinations are prepared by "Committees of Examiners," which are composed of scholars and teachers drawn from faculties at colleges and universities of all types throughout the United States. Membership of the Committees is publicly listed in several of the CLEP publications. The Committee members determine the skill and content to be tested by an exam, select the questions and review the complete test. The test is normed by administering it to college and university students who are completing the course that the exam is to measure equivalent knowledge of (p. 4). If a new examination is requested, 18 to 30 months are needed for its development. In 1974, thirty-seven separate Subject Examinations were available to candidates.

Issues and Criticism

A college or university using CLEP to grant academic credit to its students must thrash out many policy issues. Burnette (1971) argues that an unequivocal, printed statement is necessary, one that specifies the amount of credit a student can receive by examination, for what score, and for how much money. He describes policies at Florida Southern whereby a student may earn credit by examination for any course in the catalog if he has not already received credit for it from the college. By scoring at or above the national 50th percentile a

student may earn up to 30 semester hours of credit from the General Examination.

In Burnette's judgment the validity of credit by examination must be demonstrated and "sold" locally since numerous objections may be raised about a CLEP program. For example, business officers fear lost revenue and professors suspect too many will pass because of statistical loopholes. At Florida Southern an extensive selling program was undertaken, including the evaluation of specimen examinations and comparison of test results with grades on a student-by-student basis. (Burnette reports that their pilot study determined that with a 500 cut-off score no student would receive credit who did not merit it by usual institutional criteria.)

A myriad of other policy questions must be considered, such as who is eligible to take the exams, who decides cut-off scores, must scores be equated with specific courses, and may a professor disallow credit by examination for his discipline. The result of a clear policy is that good students and new students, such as adults and veterans, are attracted by it (Burnette 1971, pp. 26-28). Although Enger and Whitney (1974) are in agreement with Burnette in describing the difficulties associated with adopting standardized exams for local crediting use, they state: "With their wide use, CLEP examinations have come to represent a common currency; many colleges and universities now accept CLEP scores for credit in lieu of college coursework" (p. 236).

Use of the CLEP program by colleges and universities has not escaped criticism. Caldwell (1973) notes that CLEP is an innovation that has been adopted in college to meet demands on resources (see also Caldwell 1974 and Galfo 1974). Arguing that CLEP use has "potentially damaging" aspects, he alleges that many institutions accept the standards recommended for granting credit without regard to what the norms represent. The consequence is that "students are acquiring college credits for knowledge that is partly subcollegiate, partly unclassifiable, and in some cases trivial in quantity" (p. 899). In addition to problems about what the norms mean, Caldwell suggests that the examinations are "more analogous to high-school examinations" than they are to typical college examinations. Although he regards credit by examination as "intrinsically sound," he urges more caution in the use of the exams.

Institutional and Special Uses of CLEP

Although the author is not aware of any recent, large-scale, intensive studies on the use of CLEP at institutions, those studies and

anecdotal articles that are available illustrate the range of use CLEP has, its successes and, in some cases, the drawbacks and criticisms associated with CLEP at an institutional level. Through the use of CLEP at the University of Iowa, students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts had earned 23,626 semester hours of credit or exemption for 10,200 courses by January 1974. Students may earn credit through the General Examination subtests if they score at or above the 80th percentile for national college sophomore norms. Credit is also given for scores above the 50th percentile on specific Subject Examinations. Enger and Whitney (1974) contrast their understanding of the purpose of CLEP with its actual use at Iowa. Few of the freshmen at Iowa who score well on CLEP have been out of high school for more than a year; its actual use is to satisfy basic graduation requirements. However, the granting of credit through CLEP has not led to shortened degree programs.

Enger and Whitney trace the progress of 10 percent of the class entering in fall 1969 who earned CLEP credit. These were good students to begin with, and they graduated on time in May 1973. Subtracting their credit from CLEP, they earned more hours with higher grade point averages than their fellow class members. However, regression analyses revealed that in comparison with the traditional indicators (grade-point average, high school rank) achieving CLEP credit was not a powerful predictor that graduation would occur either on time or early. Enger and Whitney conclude that although the most able students earn CLEP credit they stay enrolled for a full program anyhow (pp. 236-241).

According to Fagin (1971), CLEP examinations are a good means to transform the life experiences and nontraditional educational activities of the average American housewife and mother into college credit. She describes an experimental CLEP program at the St. Louis campus of the University of Missouri. The purpose of the program was to assess the ability of mature women to qualify for college credit through CLEP. Over a two-year period close to 900 adults took a CLEP exam and 58 percent earned a credit-recommending score on at least one of the five subtests of the General Examination. Fagin also found that adult knowledge in fine arts and social studies was well-measured by CLEP (pp. 18-20).

One experimental program for the use of CLEP, often referred to and frequently scoffed at, took place at San Francisco State College in 1971 (Whitaker 1972). CLEP availability was advertised and offered free to each first-time freshman admitted for fall 1971. Sixty-seven per-

cent of the eventual fall enrollees actually took a CLEP examination. Ninety-four percent of the students who took the exam (including those who did not enroll) qualified to receive some credit. Thirty-eight percent received scores high enough on all five of the General Examinations to receive 30 hours of credit and status as sophomores. Whitaker notes that if a cut-off score of the 25th percentile had been maintained, and if all entering students had been given the CLEP General Examinations, the college would have granted credit equal to 10 percent of their fulltime equivalent enrollment. However, minor changes in the cut-off score would make drastic changes. With a cut-off score of 500, approximately equal to the 50th percentile, only 7 percent of the examinees would have received sophomore standing, and only 63 percent would have received some credit. San Francisco State College changed its cut-off score to the higher figure.

A later study in California explores the use of CLEP for credit at the three levels of higher education in California: University of California campuses, state university and college campuses, and community college campuses (Goldman 1974). Questionnaires sent in February 1974 resulted in the observation that policies on CLEP credit varied from no policy to no credit to credit for various examinations. Thirteen percent of the state colleges and universities gave no credit. All seven of the University of California campuses gave credit for at least one CLEP examination (pp. 2-3). CLEP credit that is accepted is generally applicable only to general educational requirements and electives. Goldman observes that her study revealed wide variation in policy regarding the individual CLEP examination that will be accepted throughout the state university and college and community college systems.

Further insight on the use of CLEP in California as an equivalency exam for freshman English can be garnered from a statement by Edward M. White, an English department chairman and (in fall 1974) special consultant to the chancellor of the California State University and College System. White reports that publicity surrounding the use of CLEP at two California state colleges (cf. Whitaker above) led to "serious professional evaluation of the validity, scoring, and administration of the tests . . . among the faculties" (White 1974, p. 28). As a result of objections raised by the State College English Council, the chancellor's office sponsored a study of the use of equivalency tests in English, which determined that the use of CLEP broadened opportunity for college credit by examination and focused widespread attention on the issues associated with credit by examina-

tion. White argues that equivalency testing would be more acceptable to faculty if the tests were valid, academically respectable, college-level tests, and if proper care were taken so that students would not be cheated of the opportunity to develop their capacities.

White recommends a clarification of the purpose of freshman English and a testing program (objective and essay) that reliably and validly requires college level proficiency. Administration of the test must be followed by "professional and sensitive" use of test results. White urges that the student demonstrating proficiency through such a testing program should be encouraged to develop these capacities (through more course work in English) (p. 43).

At an upper division college, Florida Atlantic University, CLEP examinations have been used successfully for several years through the Faculty Scholars Program (Stetson 1971; confirmed by telephone conversation, November 1974). Advanced high school students take CLEP examinations and with a sufficient score (above 500 on the average on all five sub-tests; one score may be at the 30th percentile) they receive credit on their transcript in general education. A student might receive 45 quarter hours of credit, leaving a balance of 135 hours for degree requirements. The result is an accelerated degree program (pp. 23-24). Students in the Faculty Scholar Program do well, achieving high grade-point averages and finding high social acceptance, since they will be on campus for 3 years instead of for 2 (p. 25). In contrast with score patterns reported for adults, the scores reported by Stetson for the Faculty Scholars Program show average scores higher in natural science and mathematics and lower in the humanities and English (p. 24).

Richmond and McLuskey (1973) provide enthusiastic statistics on the use of CLEP at Arkansas State University. Based on studies of students who had submitted CLEP scores and who were enrolled during 1973, the two investigators found that, on the average, CLEP credits earned equalled 75 percent of a typical semester course load, (p. 11). CLEP credit recipients were among the best students admitted and they earned grade-point averages substantially above the average of those students who did not earn CLEP credit. Furthermore, grades in subjects for which CLEP credit was earned supported the belief that students should be permitted to continue their studies in those subjects (pp. 12-13). By Richmond and McLuskey's calculations, CLEP credit resulted in average savings of $638.14 to the student and $333.74 to Arkansas.

One novel use for credit-by-examination programs (not restricted

to CLEP) is the suggestion by O'Hearne (1972) that credit be used in place of token scholarships. He proposes that colleges and universities that are looking for methods to attract students besides scholarships should institute a credit-by-examination program. O'Hearne finds numerous virtues in such a program in that it would improve school-college relationships, loosen up college curriculas, permit students to satisfy curricular requirements and select from a broader range of courses, reduce the financial burden on families, and permit faculty members to identify "bright potential majors" (O'Hearne 1972, pp. 22-24).

CLEP and the Library Independent Study and Guidance Project

CLEP has been interwoven in a continuing project aimed at involving public libraries in the design and implementation of individually tailored support services for adults engaged in or planning independent learning projects. In 1971 CLEP began work with three public library systems in an effort to advertise its availability and to provide assistance to adults interested in taking the examination. CLEP staff members realized that public libraries could be a natural source of study materials for adults wishing to take the examinations for academic credit. Library systems (San Diego, Miami, St. Louis) near colleges and universities that were granting CLEP credit were provided posters, pamphlets and radio-television advertisements, and they were encouraged to develop reading lists. The Dallas Public Library was provided with funds to examine the role of the library in providing support services. Study guides in 29 subjects were developed in cooperation with Southern Methodist University. Although 6,000 study guides were distributed in a two-year period, only 191 CLEP exams were taken. This led to the conclusion that more tailoring was needed before the specific information needs of adults could be related to their learning styles and plans. A national office, the Office of Library Independent Study and Guidance Projects, was formed to coordinate and fund efforts by libraries to meet the educational planning and study needs of independent adult learners, including those working independently of the formal educational structure (*Role of Public Libraries in Supporting . . .* 1974, pp. iii-iv, 2-17).

Eleven projects are now funded through the office. The overall project has the aim of assisting public libraries "to become learning centers for adults whose learning styles and interests are generally not compatible with the constraints imposed by traditional educational delivery systems (*Program Summaries . . .* 1974, p. 4). Most of the eleven projects include methods for adults to get information about

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CLEP, but some feature CLEP programs. Thus, Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland, is concentrating on helping adults who want to study independently for CLEP or for credit through an external degree program (p. 7). In St. Louis, the public library organized a metropolitan area information center for CLEP (p. 12). Now the St. Louis Library has become the first adult CLEP Counseling and Testing Center in the nation. Guidelines developed will be employed at other CLEP centers in public libraries (Toro 1974, p. 31).

Other Examination Programs for Academic Credit

Although the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is the largest program of examination for academic credit, other programs are available. For example, the American College Testing Program (ACT) examination is being used in some cases by colleges to grant credit or waive course requirements. ACT conducted a survey in the fall of 1973 to determine the number of institutions using test scores to waive course requirements or grant credit. The survey included all institutions that use ACT other than scholarship services and athletic conferences. Out of over 2,000 institutions surveyed 1,506 responded. Some 81 percent (1,217) indicated they granted credit on the basis of some type of examination (*Survey of Institutional Credit . . .* 1973, p. 1). Among the institutions that grant credit by examination, 8.4 percent use ACT, 78.4 percent use CLEP, 4.3 percent use the New York Regents College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP), 38.7 use individual department examinations, and 26 percent use some other form of evaluation (p. 2).

The College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP), mentioned above, was established in 1961 by the Regents of the University of the State of New York. The 1973 catalog (*Regents External Degrees. College Proficiency Examinations* 1973, p. vii) states that 40,000 credits have been earned since 1963, with thousands more applied toward school teacher certification. In addition to the Proficiency Examination Program, the Regents provide the Regents External Degree Examinations.

The CPEP is a college-level testing program offering single-subject examinations in a variety of subject matter fields. Over 30,000 CPEP examinations have been administered in New York, 9,000 of them in 1972. When other states' use of CPEP is added, the result is more than 40,000 college course credits. Individuals who take CPEP have mastered course materials though self-study, hospital service, correspondence instruction, television courses, or proprietary school courses, among others. Nurses and workers in allied health fields may

use CPEP examination results in work toward an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Success of the CPEP examination is considered to be one of the reasons for the establishment of the Regents External Degree Program in 1970. Because of the relationship of CPEP to the Regents, successful examination results mean college credit is actually granted by an accredited examiner. This is in contrast to CLEP, where success is ultimately determined by an educational institution that either does or does not grant credit on the basis of its own standards.

The CPEP examinations are drawn up from the recommendations of faculty consultants. Examination specifications and questions are written by the consultants who rate candidates' answers and norm the results by comparing them with responses of college students who are completing comparable courses. Each course examination is under continuous review. The actual CPEP subject examinations are designed to measure factual knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge. The amount of credit granted depends on the content and scope of the examination.

In contrast to the CPEP subject examinations, the Regents External Degree Examinations in business and nursing are designed to measure broad areas of competence rather than knowledge pertinent to one course. However, both CPEP and REDE examinations cover a wider range of material than would be expected in typical examinations, since the examiners have no other opportunities to measure the student's knowledge and capabilities. Free reading lists, study guides, and examination content descriptions are available to assist candidates. Grading is A-F, Pass-Fail, or standard score, depending on the exam (*Regents External Degrees . . .* 1973, *passim; College Proficiency Examinations . . .* no date, *passim*).

Conclusions

The success of examination programs for academic credit is well-established and documented. These programs have been used for numerous purposes, well beyond the simple facsimile, end-of-course examination for credit. One example is the CLEP-related library program, an off-shoot of attempts to implement CLEP. In spite of the success of these examination programs, there has been some criticism. While most of the public criticism has been directed at CLEP, which probably reflects its dominance, the concerns appear to apply to all programs. One concern is the extent to which examination programs encourage nontraditional students to obtain credentials from traditional sources. In contrast, successful tradi-

tional students are very aware of the opportunities provided by CLEP. Another concern is the legitimacy of CLEP. This issue includes concern over the content of the examinations, suspicion about the norms provided and, in some cases, doubts about whether an examination can measure what one receives in a course. This last objection, of course, pierces to the very rationale of credit by examination, namely, credit for learning regardless of source. Faculty resistance stems from professional questions about the validity of the examination and from fear that too much credit by examination will mean fewer students to teach. In both instances the "validity" of the examinations may be increased by pushing cut-off scores to levels obtainable only by the elect. In spite of these negative observations, credit by examination is a major source of opportunity to earn credit for off-campus learning. It enables institutions to individualize and adapt their programs to the achievements brought by some students, although these may not be primarily the nontraditional students.

Academic Credit for Prior Learning in Noncollegiate Organizations

Many institutions in our society that are not primarily educational enterprises have educational programs. Colleges and universities must recognize that learning takes place in noncollegiate organizations, such as businesses, labor unions, the government, and particularly the armed forces. For many years, the American Council on Education's Commission on Accreditation of Service Experience (CASE) provided academic credit recommendations based on an evaluation of military service course-work. Now, the Commission's successor, the Office of Educational Credit (OEC), has broadened its function and stands ready to assess a variety of educational efforts in civilian noncollegiate organizations. In cooperation with OEC, the New York Education Department has published a guide evaluating noncollegiate-sponsored instruction in many New York organizations. Also, a new military office called the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) has been established to assist servicemen seeking academic credit for their experience.

One form of recognition, the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) does not readily fit into the picture of academic credit for prior learning. With limitations, CEU is an additional method of recognizing educational experiences in noncollegiate organizations which is available to colleges and universities that wish to grant academic credit for prior off-campus learning.

CASE

The traditional and predominant effort in assessing the educational efforts of primarily noneducational organizations has been the work of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences (CASE). Activities of the Commission in assessing the collegiate value of service experiences have been explained to college and universities through a publication known as the *"CASE Guide," "Turner Guide,"* or *"Guide."* Each of the three editions lists service courses and recommends credit equivalents. Each edition has been prepared in response to a specific need. Thus, after World War II, when the *Guide* was first initiated, educators desired to bring order into the practice of granting college credit to veterans. The second edition was published in response to the influx of Korean War veterans. The third edition

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(1968) was in response to changes in the educational benefits available to veterans and service people, as well as to massive changes in course work in the service brought about by technological progress (American Council on Education 1975, p. xiii).

Over the years the work of CASE has received accolades. Houle regards CASE as an example of a program that satisfies one of the basic requirements for an external degree program: some method to connect the accomplishments of learners directly to the usual standards, credits, and courses commonly accepted by educators. CASE has done this by assigning credit equivalencies to training programs not sponsored by educational institutions. Houle explains the original rationale for the program as follows: "It seemed unfair that a man or woman who had been through one or more service schools (which usually lead to advanced technical competence and include many components of general education) would be considered to have learned nothing which might be used as credit toward a degree which he might have spent the war years acquiring" (p. 70). Houle regards the CASE *Guides* as "major works of reference for the assessment of credit," and mentions a study pertaining to CASE *Guide* use at institutions in 1968. Fifty-six percent of the schools surveyed said they would grant credit on the basis of *Guide* recommendations, while 20 percent said they would not. Another 24 percent simply reported no policy (Houle 1973, p. 71).

The Commission on Non-Traditional Study also boosts the work of CASE. The Commission recommended that "creative ways need to be found to coordinate alternative systems with the academic system" (Commission on Non-Traditional Study 1973, p. 87). They regard the CASE system as a model to be employed for crediting courses offered by other alternate educational systems, such as those sponsored by government, industry, and the military. In addition to recommending an expansion of operation, the Commission advised CASE to keep up with the most recent systems of evaluation and to reach out to the various alternate systems of education and assessment (pp. 89-90).

External degree programs use CASE recommendations as a primary source in the award of credit for their degree candidates. Their practice rests on the belief that "there is general agreement among college and university personnel that students should be granted credit and advanced standing for their educational achievements acquired through military service, when such credit is appropriate to the fulfillment of degree requirements" (*Regents External Degrees . . .* 1973, p. 16). The Regents accept credit for application toward a de-

gree with the reservation that the formal course contains college-level work and has been evaluated by CASE.

The Commission and Office on Educational Credit

Following through on the recommendations of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, the American Council on Education has agreed to assume several new measuring functions for nontraditional education. At the direction of the Council, the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences (CASE) has been succeeded by the Commission on Educational Credit. Policy established by the Commission will be carried out by the Office of Educational Credit (OEC).

Work of the Office will include broader concern with educational credit practices and policies throughout postsecondary education (Miller 1974b, pp. 1-3). The interest in general credit policies arises from an awareness that the traditional geographic and institutional mobility of students has been joined by increasing mobility from "alternative learning systems" into traditional higher education (p. 16). Miller believes that the academic community must be furnished with some common concepts regarding credit, competency, levels, and degrees, since much of the current practice is ill-defined and "'based largely on educational folklore" (p. 17).

New Edition of the Guide

One of the immediate fruits of the expanded Office of Educational Credit is a new edition of the *Guide* (to be distributed early in 1975). The latest edition contains listings of formal courses offered by the Department of Defense and branches of the armed services. Recommendations are made for equivalent credit in the various categories of postsecondary education. Editors of the new guide see it (1) as a response to new uses for military course work in technical and vocational degree programs, as well as in baccalaureate and graduate programs; (2) a response to new interest on the part of service men and women in enrolling in civilian degree programs while in the service; and (3) an acknowledgement of the many new courses in the military since the previous edition was compiled. An important change is that annual editions or supplements will provide a continuous public updating of recommendations on courses based on constant review by the staff (American Council of Education 1975, p. xiii).

Courses listed in the new *Guide* are evaluated by three-member, subject-matter specialist teams. Although the primary source of in-

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formation for the evaluation is syllabus information submitted by the military course sponsor, each evaluation team formulates credit recommendations and a course description that translates the military course into meaningful civilian terms. Evaluators are nominated by regional accrediting associations, professional and disciplinary societies, educational associations, and educational institutions. They are selected on the basis of such criteria as relevant competence and experience, experience in nontraditional schools, and receptivity to the idea of granting credit for nontraditional educational experiences (p. xiv).

The courses evaluated are only those service school courses "conducted on a formal basis, i.e., approved by a central authority within each service and listed by the service in its catalogue as formal resident training . . ." (p. xix). Such courses have a prescribed flow of instruction for a specified period of time and are taught in a structured learning situation by qualified teachers. Assuming that the course work is delivered to students who have the appropriate background, and that the course operation and outcomes are satisfactory, credit hour recommendations are made based on these guidelines: one semester credit hour for each 15 hours of classroom contact plus 30 hours of laboratory work; one semester credit hour for not less than 45 hours of shop instruction or its equivalent. In addition to a credit hour recommendation, a credit level recommendation is included for one of four categories: (1) vocational certificate level describing a course where the objective is to prepare an individual for employment on a prescribed job, (2) technical or associate degree level, including lower division baccalaureate work, (3) upper division baccalaureate degree level, and (4) graduate degree level (p. xvi).

Each entry in the *Guide* includes an identification number, course title, military course number and school, location dates and length, course objectives, instructional mode, credit recommendation, and date the course was evaluated.

Two copies of the *Guide* are sent to each institution listed in the current Office of Education *Education Directory*. However, the *Guide* compilers and editor stress that the credit an institution grants on the basis of its recommendations must depend on the degree requirements and policies of the college or university. Furthermore, college and university personnel are constrained to guard against duplicate credit and to consult with major advisors before granting credit toward a student's major (pp. vii, xxii-xxiii).

Some evidence of the continued use of the *Guide* is offered by the

fact that the Advisory Service answered questions about service courses and *Guide* recommendations from colleges and universities at the average rate of 150 telephone inquiries per week in late 1974 (G. Sullivan, November 1974). The new *Guide* program may be expected to continue to contribute to the availability of academic credit for off-campus learning. Its credibility may be enhanced by the evaluation system and the continuous revision program. The apparent strengths and limitations of the *Guide* program arise from the same conditions: the *Guide* program is voluntary and no institution has to accept its recommendations. Credit recommendations are couched in cautious language that preserves for the institutions the collegiate prerogative to grant credit or not. However, since many Americans have served and are serving in the armed services, the *Guide* continues to provide a basis by which they can convert the knowledge they have acquired in the service into academic credit.

Related Activities of the Commission on Educational Credit

In addition to the new *Guide* project, the Commission on Educational Credit is engaged in several additional projects that extend the rationale behind the *Guide* into other areas. One project is designed to facilitate the conversion of military occupational specialty training into advanced standing or credit within the apprenticeship training programs of the U. S. (Miller 1974b, p. 13).

Another project directly related to the granting of academic credit for off-campus learning is the Project on Noncollegiate-Sponsored Instruction, an endeavor that seeks to provide "recognition for formal courses that are being offered outside the campus environment and sponsorship of colleges and universities" (pp. 10-11). Under this program, the evaluation strategy employed for the *Guide* is being directed toward courses sponsored by a variety of primarily noneducational organizations such as businesses, unions, professional associations, and industrial and government training programs. According to John Sullivan, director of the project, the purpose is to establish policy, procedures, and an organizational framework and system to recommend the granting of credit for noncollegiate-sponsored instruction (J. Sullivan, November 1974). On a small level, the program became operational in late 1974. Course evaluation will be issued annually. Sullivan anticipates a proliferation of course evaluation requests, observing that organizations that request evaluation of their courses are expressing a positive personnel philosophy. The credibility of the evaluation of a course rests on the professionalism of the evaluators (who will be chosen in a manner similar to the

selection of *Guide* evaluators). Although the project originally had funding that included a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education grant, a long-term problem will be how to pay for it. (Presently, much of the cost of the *Guide* program is underwritten by government and military contracts.)

New York's Guide *to Educational Programs in Noncollegiate Organizations*

In cooperation with the Office of Educational Credit of the American Council on Education, the New York Board of Regents sponsors a prototype publication to demonstrate the possibility of evaluating educational programs in noncollegiate organizations. Done in the spirit of recognizing the "importance of permitting individuals to obtain college credit or other 'educational advantage' for knowledge obtained outside the traditional classroom," the New York *Guide* is regarded as consistent with the objectives of extending access to higher education through academic recognition of adult learning. Another intention behind the New York *Guide* is to assist a college that seeks methods by which credit can be awarded for formal learning experiences outside college (*A Guide to Educational Programs* . . . 1974, n.p.n.).

Contents of this *Guide* are based on an evaluation system developed through the State Education Department. The intention is to evaluate the "formal learning experiences" offered by organizations whose primary focus is not educational. Recommendations in the *Guide* are based on the belief that it is sound educational practice to grant academic credit for such courses if they are conducted on a collegiate level and if the course is appropriate to an individual's program.

As with the OEC *Guide* procedure, an organization requesting evaluation of a course provides basic information about the course, such as the syllabus, instructional materials, evaluation methods employed, selection criteria for instructors, duration of the course, and recordkeeping methods employed. Then an evaluation team judges each course for its comparability to college-level courses. If comparable, a credit recommendation is made. In most respects, the course evaluation criteria and credit recommendations resemble those used for the OEC *Guide* program.

A series of "Questions and Answers for Students" (Q&A) provides the usual caveat that credit recommendations are not automatic, in that the recommendation must be accepted by the student's college or university. Minimum acceptable performance in a course must be demonstrated at the level expected at the sponsoring organization.

For college and university administrators the Q&A stress that the credit recommendations are advisory. Since grading varies, the *Guide* suggests acceptance of recommendations be translated into credit only and not grades. In addition, it is noted that courses listed are those requested for evaluation by the sponsoring organization, and no conclusions should be drawn regarding other courses offered by organizations. The intended use of the *Guide* is for New York organizations and institutions; however, the compilers admit the likelihood that it will be used throughout the U. S.

A sample course evaluation and recommendation selected by the author includes the following information:

> Eastman Kodak Company [sponsor]
>
> *Title:* Instructional Process Workshop
>
> *Location:* Marketing Education Center, Rochester, New York
> Marketing Education Center, San Francisco, California
>
> *Length:* 35 to 50 hours (individualized program)
>
> *Dates:* May, 1973-Present
>
> *Objective:* To develop basic teaching skills for marketing education specialists in preparation for their first training assignments.
>
> Instruction: Basic course in instructional technology, with an introduction to educational psychology, learning theory, and instructional strategies. Topics include: objectives, learning strategy, adult learning principles, developing a teaching plan, developing teaching materials, educational development process, media production process, logistical support process, presentation techniques, and evaluation.
>
> *Credit Recommendation:* 3 semester hours in the undergraduate degree category in Education.

Whither DANTES and USAFI?

Most discussions of academic credit for off-campus learning in noncollegiate organizations include a reference to the U. S. Armed Forces Institute (USAFI). At one time USAFI provided for the administration of CLEP examinations and subject examinations for service personnel throughout the world. However, USAFI has been "disestablished," and some of its activities have been assumed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). DANTES is responsible for educational support service of all voluntary education programs in the military. According to a release provided by its director, William Gager (1974), DANTES has the two-fold mission of supporting the provision of examination programs and improving educational opportunities by providing information on independent study programs available to service men and women by civilian educational institutions. In addition, DANTES

will provide GED testing, CLEP General and Subject examinations, and Department of Defense Subject Standardized Tests at secondary, occupational, and collegiate levels after these tests have been validated by the Office of Educational Credit, American Council on Education. Thus, DANTES may be expected to provide additional methods for service personnel to translate off-campus learning into academic credit. At the time this publication was being prepared little information on the nature of that assistance was available.

The Continuing Education Unit (CEU)

One program that is *not* designed to translate off-campus experience into academic credit is the Continuing Education Unit (CEU). A brief explanation of CEU's is included here because they are used to record educational experiences that may arise within an organization that has other than an educational focus. Furthermore, the limitations on the use of CEU's for academic credit cannot prevent colleges or universities from employing CEU's in their evaluation of a student for academic credit.

The National Task Force on the Continuing Education Unit (1974) reports that noncredit continuing education has been the fastest growing segment of education in the United States since the close of World War II. This growth has occurred in the format of evening classes, short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences and institutes designed to meet needs caused by the rapid and continual expansion of knowledge (p. v). A consequence of participation in these noncredit sessions has been that participants found it difficult to maintain or transfer a record of their experiences. By the same token, employers, examiners, and professional groups also needed some uniform method to record and evaluate the noncredit activities of applicants, employees and members. Thirty-four organizations assembled in 1968 and appointed a Task Force that delineated and defined the Continuing Education Unit (p. v).

CEU's are defined as "ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction" (p. 3). Each of the elements of the definition is explained and illustrated. The general application of the CEU is broad—it may be applied to "qualified noncredit continuing educational learning experiences regardless of the teaching-learning format, duration of the program, source of sponsorship, subject matter, level, audience or purpose" (p. 6). However, CEU's are not to be given for programs that carry academic credit. The CEU is designed as a parallel standard of measurement

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to the credit hour designed for application to noncredit continuing education. The handbook for CEU's suggests also that, "except in unusual circumstances," CEU's should not be translated into credits or vice versa (p. 30).

Conclusions

Since World War II the CASE *Guide* recommendations have provided a pathway for the translation of a military service training course into what must be a staggering quantity of academic credit. The transformation of CASE into the Office of Educational Credit now permits the expansion of this useful approach into civilian areas of sponsored noncollegiate instruction. The consequence is that the training programs pursued by an individual working in industry, government, business, unions, professional societies, or other organizations may be plugged directly into a degree or credential granting program of a college or university.

One limitation to this type of program is that usually only the formal course programs of major organizations are subject to the evaluation procedure; consequently, the credibility of the course assessment rests to some degree on the establishment nature of the course sponsor. At the same time, the logistical requirements from widespread use of this system are mammoth; a nationwide, "on demand," evaluation program would necessarily embrace thousands of sponsors and courses. One weakness is that the course participant is at the future mercy of both the course evaluators and the college and university administrators, since they are at liberty to accept or reject the course credit recommendations.

Educational purists may raise the question whether courses offered by noncollegiate sponsors can ever have scholarly objectivity. Hypothetical course titles and sponsors illustrate this problem: "Economics of Teaching" by the A.F. of T., "The Role of Business in the American Economy" at General Motors, "Public Telecommunications Policy" from A.T. & T., and "American Defense Policy" at the Pentagon. In large measure the answers to this issue emphasize the role of the evaluators who are chosen to decide how noncollegiate courses can be translated into academic terms.

Another future issue is whether this method should be used to translate the educational programs of nontraditional, nonregionally accredited institutions, such as proprietary schools, into academic credit. Although such a practice might facilitate and expedite the recognition of study at these nontraditional schools, it also begs the

question of whether it is necessary at all, or whether it is not properly the domain of accrediting organizations.

Despite these limitations and issues, the "translate, evaluate, recommend" approach to noncollegiate-sponsored instruction represented by the OEC *Guide* offers many adults the opportunity to seek academic credit for their off-campus learning. In this way institutions that use the *Guide* recommendations operate in the adaptive mode spoken of by Glaser.

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Academic Credit for Prior Learning for Life and Work Experience

Students who arrive at or return to American colleges and universities after some adult life experience may possess experience or knowledge that is equivalent to some portion of a college degree program. Today many institutions grant academic credit for the learning gained by prior life or work experience.

People need credentials for their educational experiences, since it is the nature of our society that employers and all types of gatekeepers demand credentials. Recognizing that need, the Commission on Non-Traditional Study recommends that "new devices and techniques should be perfected to measure the outcomes of many types of nontraditional study and to assess the educational effect of work experience and community service" (Commission on Non-Traditional Study 1973, p. 125). However, the Commission is concerned about institutions that accept work experience or community service work as credit for degrees when there is no assurance that such experiences are in fact educational. They approach the granting of academic credit for prior work and life experience with great caution, asserting that "formal academic credit should be given for such life experiences and community service, but only if they fit into some significant comprehensive plan for learning and if their educative results can be evaluated" (p. 129). Experience itself is not the same thing as learning. Yet the social compulsion demanding credentials requires colleges and universities to find ways to measure the outcomes of experience.

Experiential Learning

In this discussion the term experiential learning means learning by experiences in life or work outside a classroom. Usually it means learning that occurs *prior* to enrollment in a college or university program that grants credit for such experience.

The difference between classroom learning and experiential learning is suggested by Coleman in the Games Program of Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organizations of Schools (Coleman et al. 1973, p. 3). Little scholarly attention has been directed at the difference between what Coleman calls "information-processing learning," the type that typically occurs in schools, and "experiential

learning," which takes place in everyday life outside schools. The two processes are partially interchangeable and neither is a self-sufficient mechanism to cover the range of human learning.

Information-processing learning occurs in the classroom in four steps. First, information about a general principle or a specific example is transmitted and received through a symbolic medium. Second, the information is assimilated and the general principle is understood. Third, the message is particularized so that a specific application is inferred from the general principle. Fourth, movement occurs in the learner from the cognitive and symbol-processing sphere to the sphere of action.

In contrast, experiential learning occurs in nearly the reverse sequence. The symbolic medium is not used to transmit information; rather, information is produced because of action. First, action occurs and the effects are observed. Second, the particular case is understood so that a prediction can be made if a repetition of similar action occurs. Third, a generalization is made. This may happen only after a number of actions. The generalization at this level may not be articulated by the learner. Fourth, when the general principle is understood, the next step is to apply the generalization in a new circumstance that is within the range of the generalization (pp. 3-4).

There are important differences in the properties of the two varieties of learning. Although information-processing learning is heavily dependent on understanding the symbolic medium, it is much more efficient when a learner has something new to learn. Its weak point occurs in the steps of particularizing and acting, or in getting the learner to translate understanding of a principle or case into action. In contrast, experiential learning does not require the symbolic medium. It is a powerful learning mechanism if act and consequence are closely connected; it is weak if there is separation of time or space between act and consequence. Motivation for success arises in the act itself. The weakest link is movement from participation in a particular experience to a general principle that can be used in novel circumstances (p. 5).

Coleman's observations about the difference between experiential and information-processing learning are illustrative of the difficulties faced by colleges when they seek to convert evidence of experiential learning into academic credit equivalents.

Current Practice in the Assessment of Experiential Learning

The literature available on the assessing and crediting of prior experiential learning is sparse. However, the work of Meyer, the

CAEL project and its institutional members, and the many individuals working in colleges and universities are changing this.

In 1971, the staff of Career Options Research and Development of the Chicago YMCA put together a brief report on credit for life and work experience using an Office of Education grant. They defined credit for life and work experience as "the granting of credits by colleges for non-academically achieved knowledge and proficiency, acquired either previous to or concurrent with enrollment in college programs" (*Credit for Life and Work Experience* 1971, p. 1).

They reasoned that there was a need for more paths to credentials for social and human services workers and drew on the precedent of credit for clinical work experience, long part of the training of teachers, social workers, and doctors. However, they noted that it is much easier to credit work experience that is planned as part of a college experience than it is to credit prior work experience. Since they were concerned with "new careerists"—that is, mature adults being retrained or recredentialled for better positions—they stressed the "reality grounding" that such students bring to any new learning situation as additional justifications for credit for experience (pp. 2-8).

The state of the art for institutional assessment of experiential learning leading to academic credit has to be derived from inventories, surveys, and speculation based on the few published or at least publicly reproduced explanations of institutional practice. Numerous commentators have observed that many decisions to grant credit for life or work experience occur informally, with a slight bending of the rule, rather than with elaborate procedures and formulas. As institutions adopt more formal assessment practices to award academic credit, care will be required so that the justice of informal procedures is not replaced by unjust bureaucratic methodology.

The CAEL Program

One recommendation of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study calls for the establishment of a special agency to analyze the experiences of agencies outside formal education in evaluating work or service experience so that techniques suitable for application by educational institutions in nontraditional study can be applied (p. 130). As a result of that recommendation, the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL) was formed. Just as CLEP dominates the field of college-level credit by examination and CASE dominates the field of programs for evaluation of noncollegiate sponsored instruction, CAEL currently dominates the field of assessment

of experiential learning. CAEL is a cooperative effort of the Educational Testing Service and a group of colleges and universities, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation ("CAEL. Announcing . . ." 1974, p. 3).

CAEL seeks to develop methods and techniques to assess experiential learning. Current practices will be inventoried and a taxonomy constructed; a collection of assessment materials and methods will be assembled; and manuals and guidelines will also be created. All of these materials and processes will be developed in light of their contribution to the individual's hold on his own educational program and as an attempt to aid institutions that seek to assess and credit experiential learning (p. 4). Assessment devices developed through CAEL will be tried out to see if they work (p. 5). CAEL also expects to serve as a clearinghouse to gather and distribute information on the assessment of experiential learning (p. 5).

The organization of CAEL is multileveled. Nine task force institutions are engaged in the intensive development and trial of assessment techniques. The Steering and Implementation Committees establish policy, monitor projects, and give overall direction (pp. 6-8). The CAEL Assembly is the general membership body open to recognized degree-granting institutions that are interested in experiential learning. As with other aspects of CAEL, the Assembly has shown rapid growth. By July 1974 there were about 150 members of the Assembly, which had increased to 174 by October 1974. Institutions of all varieties are members and most offer some type of graduate degree ("The CAEL Assembly" 1974, p. 3).

The rationale for CAEL is the recognition by educators in postsecondary education that many types of learning are equivalent to and appropriate for a college degree program. In CAEL's parlance, experiential learning means competencies that contribute to an individual's education program, typically from work, community or self-directed learning, developed before or during enrollment in a college or university and related to the institution's procedures and curriculum. Simple recognition of the value of experiential learning is not enough; it must be measured. Frequently this means measuring performance rather than explanation ("CAEL. Announcing . . ." 1974, pp. 2-3). As Keeton explains, the name CAEL signifies an emphasis on "assessment of learning in situations in which the relative priority for effort is not upon work with symbols but with their referents: observing, interacting, performing, making things happen . . ." (Keeton 1974, p. 1).

Much of the development work for CAEL is guided by seven

Development Tasks selected by the Steering Committee as part of the focus on four priority areas for 1974-75 ("CAEL Developmental Tasks for 1974-75" 1974, pp. 1-5). Priority Area I is "The Assessment of the Achievement of Interpersonal Skills." Related development tasks include "The Assessment of Interpersonal Skills" and "A Student Guide to the Assessment of Interpersonal Skills." Priority Area II is "The Use of Portfolios in the Assessment of Non-sponsored Learning." The tasks are "Guide for Assessing Prior Experience Through Portfolios" and "Student Workbook on Preparing a Portfolio." Priority Area III is "The Assessment of the Learning Outcomes to Work Experience" with tasks on "The Evaluation of Work Experience" and "A Workbook on the Integration of Work Experience." Priority Area IV is "The Use of Expert Judgment in Assessing Learning Outcomes" and the task is "Guidelines and Techniques for the Assessment of Experiential Learning."

One type of development method, the CAEL Special Projects, was established at Task Force and Assembly institutions "in order to take advantage of the special interests, experiences and resources of institutions to deal with aspects of the problem that are better addressed at the level of an individual institution (Burns 1974, p. 6). Special Projects chosen were picked from among 60 proposals submitted.

Brief descriptions of the Special Projects ("CAEL Special Projects" 1974) demonstrate the range of activity underway. At Community College of Vermont a project to produce guidelines and teaching materials will enable students to write competency statements for a learning contract based on their prior experiential learning. At Framingham State College a training model is being developed that incorporates a resume form for the student's description of prior experiential learning, with instructions and guidance to the student. A model training institute on portfolio development is available for students. The Regional Learning Service of Central New York has a project to identify skills acquired in home management and relate them to undergraduate course objectives.

CAEL Survey of Current Practice

A CAEL survey report is the only inventory of institutional practice in the assessment of experiential learning that the author uncovered in preparation of this work (*Current Practices in the Assessment . . .* 1974). The compilers of it stress that it is a working paper based on a limited sample of institutional practice with temporarily

stipulated classifications. CAEL found that credit for prior experience is most often granted for work experience. Whereas traditional institutions tend to have programs for credit of sponsored programs, new and innovative institutions have programs both for prior and sponsored learning (pp. 19-21). The students in programs of credit for prior learning are older and may have been away from school for some time. For them, time and credit mean money. They may be unaware of the value of their experience, have difficulty expressing what they have learned, and need counseling and advice on pursuing their own goals. They also may be uncomfortable with standardized examinations (p. 22). Colleges and universities that have programs of credit for prior learning may justify them as a method to provide access to college for students who would not get in through traditional routes. In some instances credit is granted in limited amounts for experience to help the student gain admission (pp. 26-28).

Several models are employed within programs that credit prior learning. One is the faculty-based model, where the faculty uses some method to assess what the student knows in order to grant credit. Blocks of credit, roughly equivalent to catalog courses, may result from this approach. Another model requires the student to plan what he needs to know in a program and then demonstrate through some form of assessment that he has already learned some of it. According to CAEL, those institutions employing a competency approach to degrees may use either faculty- or student-based models. There is a relationship between the institutional approach and the outcomes from prior learning expected of the student. Thus a competency-based program expects students to be able to demonstrate competencies acquired from prior learning, while a course-credit program attempts to link prior learning either to specific courses or blocks of courses. The universal problem in crediting experiential learning is how to specify what the student learns (pp. 30-37).

The purpose of assessment of experiential learning is both individual and institutional. For the individual, assessment provides a method of facilitating personal development. In addition, it results in the crediting and recognition of learning the individual has acquired. CAEL regards this as a "powerful agent in promoting educational flexibility," since the individual's learning is recognized regardless of how it was learned (pp. 38-39). From the institutional standpoint, assessment helps support program development and maintain quality.

Based on their survey of practice, CAEL describes the following steps usually followed when a student's prior learning is assessed:

1. The student acquires information on the availability of credit for prior learning. He gives initial information on what he has learned to some agent.

2. More information is supplied to the student about what he has to do to receive credit.

3. The student identifies learnings, competencies, and skills that appear to be creditable. He also solicits verification or documentation of that learning.

4. A portfolio is assembled that usually contains a specific request for credit, an explanation of the competencies acquired, and a collection of documenting evidence.

5. Faculty assistance is sought on assembling the portfolio into a package that relates the portfolio evidence to a program. CAEL reports that "conversations with faculty and students indicate that the extent of such help to the student either in written form or personal contact is quite uneven" (p. 57).

6. The actual evaluation is carried out through some procedure (pp. 56-57).

In reality, the emphasis in assessment of prior learning is on documentation. Few other techniques to assess specific outcomes of prior learning have been developed. As might be suspected, CAEL found great variety in the amount of credit actually granted for prior learning (pp. 58-59).

CAEL Survey of Assessment Techniques

In compiling a summary of actual assessment techniques, CAEL turned to the literature and practice of business and industry, in addition to practice in educational institutions, to describe an array of assessment techniques that are appropriate for the special nature of experiential learning (*A Compendium of Assessment Techniques* 1974, pp. 1-2). The set of assessment techniques compiled and described include performance tests such as work samples and unobtrusive observation, simulations (including leaderless group discussions, management games, interviews, role playing, stress interviews, and written simulation), the case-study method, and in-basket tests. Assessment centers, essay assignments, objective written examinations, and interviews are also assessment techniques, as are panel interviews, oral tests, and self-assessment. Self-assessment forms, information blanks, and rating procedures may also be used. Product

assessment is employed when the performance of the student cannot be observed directly (pp. 5-69).

In most instances, the CAEL *Compendium* provides a definition of the assessment method along with hypothetical examples of the technique in practice. For example, "work sample" is defined as "A test which attempts to reproduce all or an important part of the actual operations and tasks of the job" (p. 5). Use of it is illustrated by hypothesizing an Air Force veteran seeking academic credit toward an associates degree in electronic technology. He is given a work sample assessment where he must demonstrate his knowledge on some standard communications equipment.

Some fairly straightforward techniques in eliciting information about a student's accomplishments are suggested in the *Compendium*. For example, the interview where a candidate is questioned about his accomplishment may provide a more valid picture of life or work experience than would heavy documentation (p. 50).

One valuable method, product assessment, is necessary for the assessment of many types of experiential learning, since the learning usually takes place away from the classroom. The actual evaluation of products (diaries, poems, compositions, drawings, paintings, etc.) is usually done by experts and may be essentially subjective. An additional drawback to product assessment is that it lends itself to selective portrayal. Students are not likely to provide products that demonstrate failure (pp. 67-69).

Institutional Examples of Assessment of Life and Work Experience

A few sketches of institutional policies and practices in assessing life and work experience for academic credit will demonstrate many of the policies, techniques, and problems that have formed the basis of the theoretical discussion. Additional examples of practice are found in chapter six. Also, readers may wish to consult the *CAEL Resource Book* (1974).

In describing the policy at Antioch, Churchill (1973) suggests that the educational value of past learning should be recognized and that past learning should be integrated with the planning for future learning. The rich experiences of adult students enrolled in nontraditional programs make this need even more obvious (p. 1). The Antioch policy emphasizes the evaluation of *demonstrable* past *learning*. Two stages are visible in evaluation: the learning is identified by the student who has acquired it, and it is evaluated by those who are competent to do so. Student identification of prior learning should be part of the initial application procedure so that future

learning can be planned around it. For many adults, this is a difficult stage, since they are not experienced in describing what they know. For this reason a variety of methods must be used to evaluate the prior learning of adults. Each Antioch campus must develop a similar plan for each student's degree program that outlines the way the student will use past and present learning.

At Antioch-Minneapolis Communiversity collegiate credit is granted for learning acquired from life experiences (called experiential learning) when it is reported through the experiential learning report. This report describes the experience and identifies and describes what has been learned (both the learning that most people would get from the experience and the learning specific to the individual). The learning report places the learning into a subject category and requests an amount of credit. In addition, each report is expected to contain documentation or evidence of achievement, such as certificates, tapes of performances, and art products. Through the report the student is expected to critically examine his experience and report on his learning in depth. Criteria for granting credit stress that the learning must be significant in the educational plan of the student as well as demonstrable to others. Also, it must have shaped the outlook, thought, or action of the individual ("Final Report . . ." Feb. 19, 1974, pp. 1A-7A).

Emphasis is placed on regularity of procedure and external credibility of the evaluators. Evaluators must be subject-matter specialists that know the significance of collegiate learning (pp. 16A-18A). The primary performance standard used, in addition to the wisdom and integrity of the evaluators, is the equivalence of the learning to college courses or courses of study (pp. 18A-19A).

At Fontbonne College (St. Louis) and Marian College (Indianapolis) two quite different approaches are used in granting credit. At Fontbonne, the PACE program offers the opportunity for anyone over twenty to enter any degree program either for self-enrichment or for a complete college career. After completing three or more courses at Fontbonne, PACE students may apply for Credit for Life Experience (CLEAR). However, in this case the student seeks CLEAR only for courses the college offers when she believes she has accomplished the objectives of the course through study, work, or other experience. Evaluation for CLEAR is obtained through the course instructor, who reviews papers, portfolios, exhibits, and demonstrations, or offers tests, papers, or interviews in order to assess the student's accomplishment (Fontbonne College, n.d.).

The program at Marian College is distinctive because it translates

a very specific set of work experiences into degree credit. Marian College has a program with the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) Center of Indianapolis that is designed to offer FAA personnel a B.A. or B.S. degree. FAA personnel who have received specific levels of training are granted advanced standing toward degrees. The exact number of credits granted is determined by the level of training or certification they receive when they enter the Marian College program. Since the level of training acquired by personnel is a part of their personnel folder, documentation of the training is no problem. A simple translation process equates the FAA training (in specific subjects) to college credit at Marian. A maximum of 60 credit hours is applied toward a 128-hour degree program. Based on the certificate level, portions of the 60 hours possible are actually granted. For example, a certified Environmental Support Technician might qualify for 45 semester hours of credit; a Computer Specialist would receive the maximum 60 semester hours of credit. Generally, the FAA work is not converted into specific courses. Instead, large credit areas such as "mathematics" receive block credit (Marian College, n.d.).

Another example is provided by the Individually Designed Education for Adults (IDEA) program at Aquinas College. This program enables mature adults to earn an associate or bachelor's degree, to continue their education if they already have some college, or simply to explore areas of study. Significant life experiences can be converted to college credit. Through the director of IDEA, adults collect and evaluate all their previous college work, plan a program of study, and determine if they can secure credit for certain life experiences.

Within IDEA, the Life Experience Credit concept enables adults to translate past experience such as employment, extensive reading, training seminars, and workshops into course credit. The student petitions any academic department for credit if he believes he has the equivalent experience or competence required for a specific course. If he can prove that competence to the satisfaction of an evaluator, he receives full academic credit. The student must have been enrolled for one year, and must then document his reasons for applying for credit, and specify the parallels between his experience and the course content. The department reviews the application and may require updating, including examination. Usual pitfalls encountered by students include the failure to demonstrate equivalent competence, insufficient documentation, and failure to show the parallels between their experience and the course content (Aquinas College, n.d.).

Problems and Issues

Even more than other forms of granting academic credit for off-campus learning, the granting of credit for prior experiential learning is replete with problems. Paraphrasing Nelson (1974), despite the egalitarian sound to giving credit for life experience, the basic problem remains of "how to equitably convert educational or life experience into academic degree credit-hour equivalency after the fact" (p. 179). Some specific issues and questions that remain unresolved are listed below:

1. "How can students be helped to identify their prior learning" (*Current Practices . . .* 1974, p. 60)?
2. How should the prior learning of a student be related to his degree program? Is it necessary that prior learning be applied toward a specific degree objective (p. 61)?
3. "How does one measure the quality of learning that occurred 20 years ago" (p. 62)?
4. "How can credit equivalencies be established for experiential learning" (p. 62)?
5. "What limits should be placed on different types of credit granted for experiential learning" (p. 62)?
6. "What alternatives to credit hours are there for recognizing experiential learning" (p. 62)?
7. What fees can be charged and how can individualized assessment be made cost effective (p. 62)?
8. Should credit be granted on a program or course basis? A program basis may be easier, but it brings forward the question of which courses are being replaced by prior learning. Will the credit transfer? If credit is granted on a course basis, the knowledge should be fully equivalent to that acquired by a student in the course (*Credit For . . .* 1971, pp. 8-9).
9. How do we determine the correspondence between experience and the curriculum? How do we know what work and life experiences are really relevant to an academic field (p. 10)?
10. How can we be sure the procedures are fair to all (p. 10)?

Academic Credit for Prior Learning in Special Degree Programs

The methods previously described of granting academic credit for prior off-campus learning are especially useful to colleges and universities that offer special degree programs. In this chapter the external degree is defined and several examples are given of its use. In addition, special degree programs that award academic credit for prior off-campus learning are mentioned. No special selectivity criterion is implied by the inclusion of any one of these programs. However, the programs mentioned do illustrate the use of academic credit for prior learning and provide institutional educational opportunities for individuals that are adaptive to their needs and represent great variety in the kinds of prior learning they recognize.

The External Degree

Houle (1973) describes the external degree as "one awarded to an individual on the basis of some program of preparation [devised either by himself or by an educational institution] which is not centered on traditional patterns of residential collegiate or university study" (pp. 14-15). The target for the external degree is largely adults who were born too early to have used the opportunities for higher education made available in the sixties (pp. 45-47).

External degree programs make major use of methods whereby the learning accomplishments of students from nontraditional sources are related to the traditional measuring units in higher education, credits and courses. The three approaches Houle describes are "the assignment of credit equivalencies to training programs not sponsored by colleges and universities; the assessment of an individual's experience as deserving of credit; and the passing of an achievement test which measures competence in some area of content" (p. 70). Believing that the high cost and the question of the validity of experience assessment will prevent its widespread use, Houle suggests that "new confidence-inspiring techniques" might bring more progress to the external degree" (p. 72).

The concept of the external degree held by Houle stresses the importance of academic credit for prior learning. Other elements, such as an interest in the adult market, the extension of access, and the provision of a more adaptive, individually-oriented educational sys-

tem, are common to thinking about both external degrees and academic credit for prior off-campus learning. An understanding of this interrelationship can be obtained by examining typical external degree programs.

New York Regents External Degree

The University of the State of New York, a bureaucracy with technical responsibility for education in New York State, conferred its first degree in September 1972 through the Regents External Degree program. This program makes it possible for a person to earn a college degree without ever attending a college class. The student only needs to demonstrate college-level competency sufficient for one of the Regents External Degree Programs. The Regents Program is regarded as a *true* external degree: the university evaluates the student but provides no instruction, no faculty, and no campus. The students satisfy published degree requirements, but there are no age, residence, or preparation requirements. The student enrolls by filling in a form and proceeds at his own pace.

Credit for degree programs may be earned through: (1) transfer credit from regionally accredited institutions of higher learning; (2) proficiency examination (the Regents College Proficiency Examinations); (3) military service school courses; and (4) special assessment of knowledge gained from experience, independent study or other nontraditional means.

According to Nolan, the Regents External Degree is also the extension of the belief that what a person knows is more important than how he learned it. He stresses that much is done to assist learners, such as examination descriptions, study guides, bibliographies, and volunteer aid programs. Some idea of the diversity of method employed by degree candidates is now available. Out of the first 1,225 associate degree recipients, 277 earned credit for courses evaluated by CASE (Noland 1974, pp. 6-7). In addition, nearly 10,000 of the credits earned by the first 1,225 graduates were earned through standardized examination. Thirteen percent of the graduates (163) earned degrees completely by examination (p. 10). More recent figures provided in the Class Profile of Associate in Arts Degree Graduates for September 1974 show that of 1,796 graduates, 314 had earned credit by proficiency exams only, 1,094 earned credit through 4,087 CLEP General Examinations, and 199 earned credit through 658 CLEP Subject Examinations (Regents External Degree 1974, n.p.n.).

To acknowledge the achievement of the student who has acquired knowledge for which there are not standardized examinations, or for which the examinations are inappropriate, the special assessment procedure was developed. This is designed as "a flexible approach to measurement that would include oral, performance, or written examination, and the evaluation of a candidate's portfolio—artistic, literary, or musical" (p. 12). Noland stresses that special assessment is designed for knowledge acquired, not for experience alone.

The procedure for special assessment is not one to be taken lightly. The Regents suggests a careful review of the student's background. If special assessment seems warranted, the student files an application with a fee of $150. Based on the application, faculty members are chosen to serve on an assessment panel. This panel meets with the student and the depth and content of a special assessment is agreed to. The panel then decides the possible level of credit. If the candidate wishes to pursue the special assessment, he pays an additional $100 (unless the panel decides that further assessment is unwarranted). The panel develops an examination that is administered on a convenient date. The examination may be oral, written, performance, or some combination. At the completion of the examination, the candidate's performance is rated, an amount of credit awarded, and a report prepared by the panel on the performance (University of the State of New York, n.d.).

The Regents External Degree is providing the opportunity for a nontraditional group of students to pursue college degrees using what they know, regardless of how they learned it, as long as it can be evaluated in one or more of the methods described for translating prior learning into academic credit.

Thomas A. Edison College

Thomas A. Edison College was created by the Board of Higher Education in New Jersey to administer an External Degree Program (*Thomas A. Edison College . . .* 1974, p. 6). Credit for a degree can be earned through transfer, proficiency or equivalency examination, and for formal service schools evaluated by CASE. Thomas Edison College also offers "individual assessment," through which those who have acquired college-level knowledge by experience, independent study, or course work at nonaccredited institutions may acquire credit from the college. The assessment itself will be carried out by a college faculty member who might employ oral, written, or performance examinations or evaluate a portfolio. The emphasis is on college-level knowledge gained through nontraditional methods. A

variation offered by Thomas Edison is that Group Assessment may be used for groups of people who have taken training courses in a business or public agency. Individual assessment is limited to students who have enrolled for a degree at Thomas Edison College.

The college also has its own examination program known as the Thomas Edison College Examination Program. Examinations are given in business administration and foreign languages. Study guides, examination descriptions, and information are available for the students.

Empire State College

A different approach from the Regents External Degree is offered by Empire State College of the State University of New York. The primary distinctive feature is that the student pursues his education with only occasional on-site contact with the college. Working with a mentor, the student designs a degree program that meets the college learning objectives and the student's objectives. The student may receive credit for his prior learning, either school or nonschool. This credit takes the form of advanced standing toward the degree. The student prepares a portfolio of prior learning that relates what he has learned in the past to his degree plan. With the aid of his mentor, the student completes what he needs to learn through use of learning contracts. There are no preestablished degree programs (Empire State College [1974], pp. 6-10).

The policies and procedures used for granting advanced standing at Empire State demonstrate the relationship between recognition of prior learning and a contract-type, experimental degree program. Three requirements must be met before advanced standing can be granted: the learning must be articulated, the learning must be applicable to the student's goals and the objectives of the college, and there must be evidence of this learning. The two basic steps are: the student prepares a portfolio and the college evaluates it. The first task faced by the student is the identification of learning that might be recognized and the clarification of how it relates to his goals. This is a difficult process, since few people think systematically about their experiences, particularly in relation to their future educational goals. For this reason, the experience of preparing the portfolio is regarded as educational in itself. However, after this process is accomplished, the student needs to acquire the necessary documentation. The portfolio contains an initial summary requesting advanced standing in terms of months requested by area of competence, a general essay describing the long-range plans of the stu-

dent, and a description of the past experiences and learning and their relationship to future plans. The appendix of the portfolio documents the learning that is claimed.

When the portfolio is completed, it is presented to an administrator who submits it (if appropriate) to a Learning Center Evaluation Committee. A date is set and the portfolio is evaluated by a committee that may include outside evaluators. Two elements are stressed: the committee evaluation is a public process of evaluation whereby the goals of the student and the college are related to learning that is evaluated by competent experts; but the learning must be related to future goals (Empire State College 1973, pp. 1-7).

Elizabethtown College

The flexibility, individualization, and integral use of prior learning for academic credit demonstrated by Empire State, Thomas Edison, and the Regents External Degree can also be found in smaller scale operations such as the Center for Community Education of Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania (Elizabethtown College 1974e, *passim*). Each student in the Campus-Free Division has a committee known as his Advisory-Consultative-Evaluation (ACE) Committee. In addition to faculty members, the ACE has public members such as employers. Evaluation of the student's progress toward a degree depends on the ACE, which considers the "total life experiences" of a candidate. If sufficient work has been done for a degree, the degree is recommended; otherwise, the degree is recommended upon completion of stipulated additional work.

The Learning Experience Evaluation Form provides for the evaluation of each candidate not only in traditional terms, such as required grade averages and distribution requirements, but also in terms of evidence that the candidate has acquired personal attributes that reflect the goals of the college. Each candidate submits a dossier for the evaluation that includes 12 items considered by the ACE in their evaluation of the candidate's standing. The 12 items are: a covering letter; a summary of schools, colleges, universities and professional schools; a summary of seminars, workshops, service experience and training sessions; a summary of work experience; a detailed description of each job title; a summary of lecturing, writing, publications, and professional organizations; a summary of activities in social, political, religious and community enterprises; details of extensive activities in social, political, religious, and community enterprises; a summary of recreation, hobbies, family, home and travel; special citations, honors, and other relevant materials; a read-

ing list; and a two- to three-page autobiography (Elizabethtown College 1974d).

Work experience is evaluated for credit on a straightforward basis. "Each year of fulltime work in the area of concentration of the major chosen by the candidate will be counted as six (6) semester hours. Validation is made by an executive officer of the organization by whom the candidate is presently employed. He will sit on the Advisory-Consultative-Evaluation (ACE) Committee for the student" (Elizabethtown College 1974b). Work experience credit is limited to half the total required by the degree and 60 semester hours of academic course work must also be presented.

Goddard College

Another approach to academic credit for prior off-campus learning is demonstrated by the Goddard College Adult Degree Program. Advanced standing (accelerated progress toward a degree) can be granted for critical life experience (Goldberg 1973, pp. 15-16). The procedure employs a petition through which the student describes experiences occurring outside academic institutions, experiences thought to be "of significant educational worth" (Goddard College, n.d.). The petition itself is filed after consultation with an adviser who points out the intricacies of the petition process. For example, every item of documentation must be listed. The petitioner also prepares a personal essay that lists the significant experience in detail, tells how it should accelerate his progress and by how much, and provides a detailed narrative of the experience and explains how the learning from the experience fits in with current plans. A Committee on Evaluation then reads the petition and, subject to appeal, decides whether acceleration is justified. Since the Goddard program focuses on the educational process, much stress is put on the value of preparing the petition as an educational effort in itself.

Framingham State College

At Framingham State College (Massachusetts) an external degree program may include academic credit for learning achieved through life situations, including employment, community service, military service, travel, independent study, noncredit activities, and correspondence courses. When a student enters the program, a thorough evaluation of his life experiences is made and "an appropriate amount of credit is awarded."

The basic requirement for the degree is 128 hours of college equivalency credit, based either on semester hours of credit earned through

formal course work or college equivalency credit awarded for experience. But, maximums are placed on the amount of credit awarded for various types of experience: life experiences—16 (college equivalency credits), independent study—20, correspondence course—20, instruction by technology—24, military service—8, noncredit educational experiences—16, and travel—16 (Framingham State College, n.d.).

Conclusions

While these conclusions are tentative and hypothetical, they do reflect issues that are surfacing in the literature on academic credit for off-campus learning. In all forms of programs where academic credit is granted for off-campus learning, issues external to the actual crediting process influence the approach of the academic community. For example, many faculty members appear apprehensive about the threat that credit for off-campus experience and learning poses to their role as producers, conveyors, and evaluators of knowledge. This is not farfetched when, for example, "service courses" like freshman English can be avoided by students who score high enough on a CLEP examination, or when life experience programs grant credit to adults for practical experience in a field such as social work. The implication is clear. The value of the theoretical and assumed real-world knowledge possessed by the faculty member is diminished. When credits earned for life experience permit large numbers of formerly excluded people to attend college with a head start, the traditional screening devices no longer furnish preselected students.

Every form of granting credit for off-campus learning offers mechanisms to institutions that seek to be more adaptive than selective. In other words, the opportunity to earn academic credit for learning acquired prior to enrollment regardless of how learned represents a real opportunity for a new beginning to an individual who previously might have been denied that opportunity. The institution that recognizes previously acquired learning is adapting to what the student brings with him. Since an essential first step is the assessment of knowledge previously learned, the proliferation of methods for assessing knowledge regardless of source indicates that higher education may be adopting means to emphasize the role of the learner.

Most of the practice described in the literature reveals a sense of caution on the part of administrators of these programs. There is a fear of glaring publicity that keeps most programs for granting credit very conservative. Whereas credit earned for traditional classroom experience represents learning that is highly variable in content and depth, in contrast, credit for off-campus learning often employs more rigorous proof than the student would ordinarily have to show of his learning. In many cases, students who receive credit for their off-campus learning would be exceptional because of their maturity,

travel, experience, or age. Few incompetents received credit for knowledge they did not possess. Yet, in some instances, students seeking credit for their learning face double jeopardy. If they are taking an examination, it is a statistical attempt to sample their knowledge based on a sampling of knowledge held by experts in the field. If that sampling coincides with what they know, the student then must get a college or university to buy the recommendation for credit from an examiner. This problem occurs when students take examinations (where the norms used to grant credit tend to creep upward) and when courses in noncollegiate organizations are evaluated for credit.

Each mechanism for granting credit discussed in this paper relies heavily, but to varying degree, on the judgment of one or more evaluators. Although this is the same thing as relying on the judgment of a professor for grading a student, the academic world places more faith in the classroom judgment than in judgments for assessing external learning. The efforts of CAEL and individual institutions to standardize and publicize uniform assessment procedures are an attempt to deal with this problem. Training sessions for faculty members, citizens, and administrators who must make judgments about the the equivalence of a block of experience to a block of college credit provide safeguards that classroom evaluation does not have.

A constant danger faces programs of credit for off-campus learning because of the need to legitimize that learning. Instruments designed to measure knowledge learned by nontraditional learners in nontraditional ways may be calibrated by comparison to knowledge learned by traditional learners in traditional ways. The assessment device is warped by the yearning for academic legitimacy.

Most so-called programs to grant credit for life experience do not really grant credit for experience alone. A filtering device is employed, such as an examination or a petitioning process that reserves the use of examination. Frequently, the student will take the equivalent of an end-of-course examination. For this reason, fears that great blocks of academic credit are being granted for "experience" are not warranted on the basis of the literature uncovered in the course of this study.

An issue on the horizon is whether access to credit through assessment of experiential learning will be interpreted as a duplication of effort or if, on the contrary, a buyer's market will force colleges and universities to provide mechanisms to assess student learning for credit because of demand. Adults (usually meaning those over 25, or those out of the traditional college-going age bracket) are seen as potential

markets for higher education. Their experiences in work, life, and reading make them ideal candidates for credit based on knowledge acquired outside college walls. Colleges and universities have already found that programs of credit for life and work experience are attractive to these students.

What consumer-oriented regulation and activity will bring to academic credit for off-campus learning is unknown. If a college states that it gives credit through the various mechanisms for off-campus learning, it must do so. The student may want to know what he is getting for his money if he is granted credit for experience-based learning, acquires a credential in the form of a degree, and finds that it means nothing when he faces the world with it.

The biggest and so far insoluble issue is whether learning from any source can be measured and equated to learning in a traditional classroom. Related to this question is whether a degree represents the accumulation of units signifying discrete elements of knowledge, or whether it signifies a coherent configuration, a pattern with meaning and substance that goes beyond the mathematical accumulation of credit.

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